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NO. 28
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BIZARRE ADVENTURES
...THESE ARE THE UNLIKELY HEROES!
Distributed By MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

REASONABLY URGENT NOTICE: Before you continue any further, please turn to the ad on page 59. Thank you.

Hokey photo Eliot Brown

MAYBE YOU THINK IT'S EASY,

Working in the jungle of Madison Avenue! Well, you're wrong, friend. At any moment, Larry Hama may burst through that door waving an Obnoxio the Clown tee shirt and snarling, "I hear you're doing an Unlikely Heroes number. Lissen you gotta publish 'Shadow Hunter' or I'll make fun of you in CRAZY MAGAZINE."

Could *you* handle a threat like that?

Then I spot flashes coming from the direction of the EPIC ILLUSTRATED office. It's Archie Goodwin with a mirror signaling: USE * HUNTSMAN * BY * GOLDEN * AND * ME * OR * ELSE

Not pretty, eh?

Wait! What's that? More flashes: PS. * ALSO * CONSCIENCE * OF * THE * KING * BY * MY * LOVELY * AND * TALENTED * ASSISTANT * MARY * JO * DUFFY * AND * WENDY * PINI * SAME * THREAT

The dirty swine...

The worst is yet to come. Here's Frank Miller, tattered, wild-eyed, clutching a stained, torn comic book and raving, "*Daredevil* 168! That's where Elektra first appeared! And now she'll... she'll be *featured* in *Bizarre Adventures*... in her *first solo story*! You must believe me! *You must*--!"

Poor devil...

As for Bucky Bizarre... there are some things decent men don't talk about.

Vol. 1 No. 28 October 1981

"Heroes are created by popular demand, sometimes out of the scantiest materials."
-Gerald White Johnson

STAN LEE PRESENTS: BIZARRE ADVENTURES

UNLIKELY HEROES

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ELEKTRA

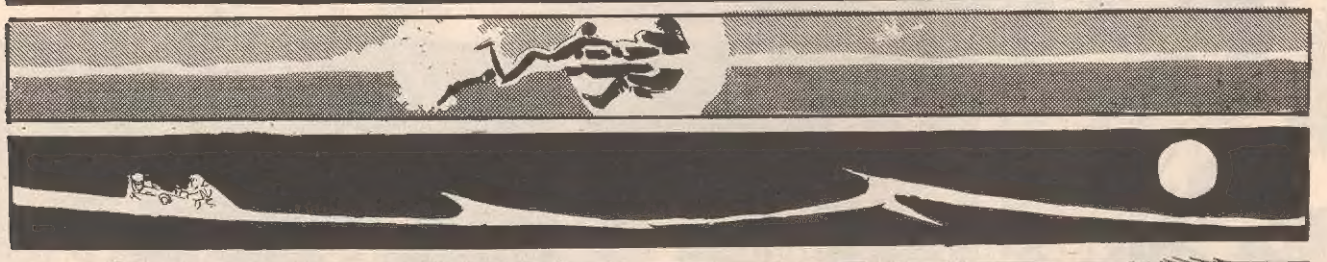
=SKREKK= FOX TO MONGOOSE. FOX TO MONGOOSE. EMERGENCY!
REPEAT. EMERGENCY. =SKREKK= COBRA HAS INFILTRATED. INTRUDER ON SHIP.
ABORT MISSION, MONGOOSE. REPEAT. ABORT MISSION.
DO YOU COPY, MONGOOSE?
MONGOOSE-- DO YOU COPY?

15. SEC
14. SEC
13. SEC
12. SEC
11. SEC
10. SEC
9. SEC
8. SEC
7. SEC
6. SEC
5 SEC
4 SEC
3 SEC
2 SEC
1 SEC
CAUTION: EXPLOSIVES
KLUG

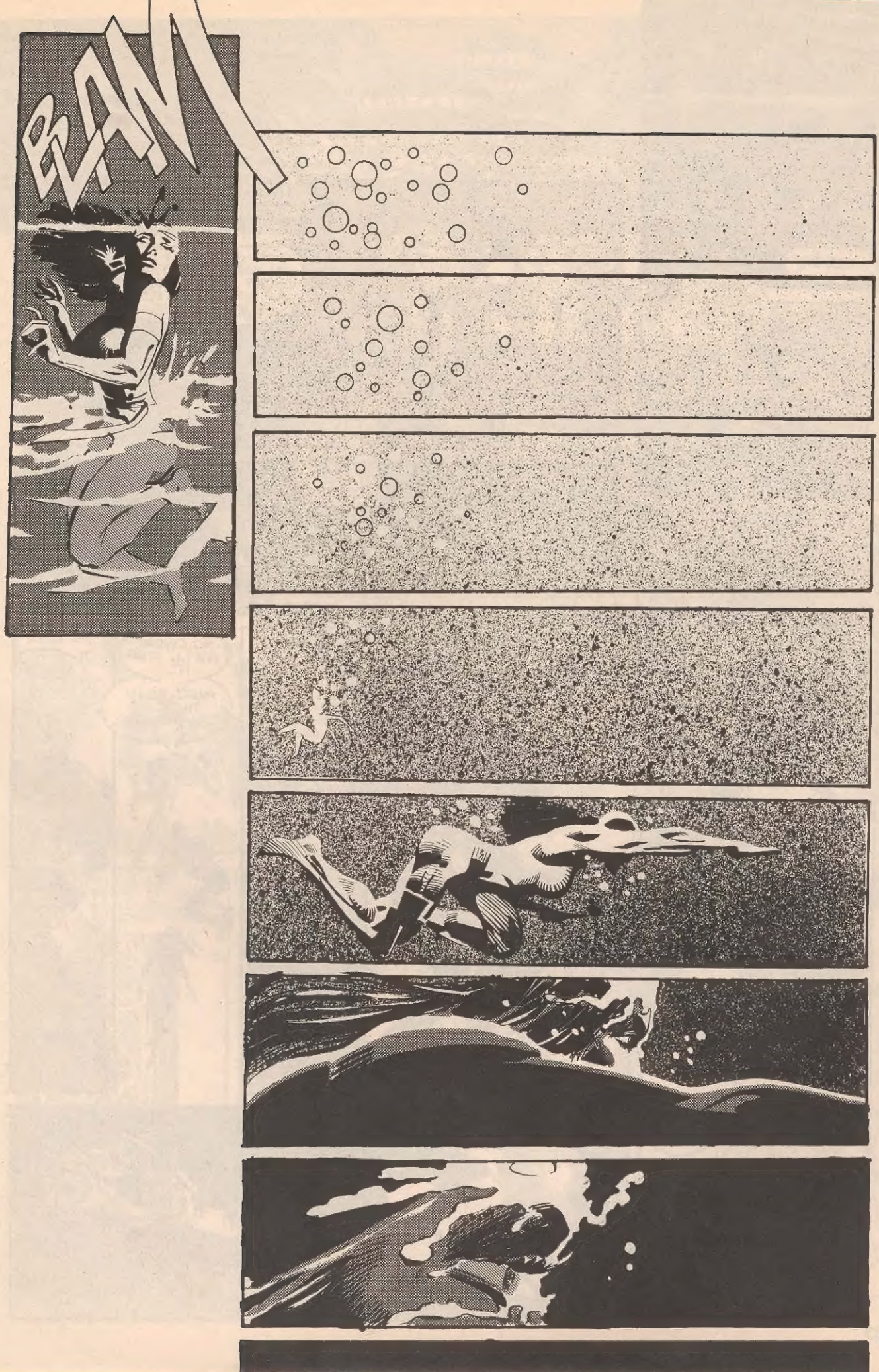
WE ARE HOURS -- DAYS -- FROM THE NEAREST LAND. ONLY BY A COMBINED EFFORT CAN WE CROSS THAT DISTANCE.
IT WOULD BE STUPID OF YOU TO KILL ME.

GUESS I'LL WAIT TILL WE'RE CLOSER TO SHORE.
YOU'RE MI-6? CIA?
A MERCENARY.
THAT WAS MY SHIP YOU JUST SANK, MERCENARY.

YOU HAVEN'T STOPPED ME. I WILL YET COMPLETE MY HOLY MISSION. VON EISENBLUTH WILL YET SUFFER--AND DIE.
HOLY MISSION? MURDERING A SPICE MERCHANT?
SPICE MERCHANT? IS THAT WHAT THEY TOLD YOU?
VON EISENBLUTH IS A MONSTER--A NAZI! DURING THE WAR, HE PERFORMED EXPERIMENTS ON INNOCENT MEN AND WOMEN... AND CHILDREN. HIDEOUS EXPERIMENTS.
MY PARENTS... MY SISTER... THEY WERE NO LONGER HUMAN WHEN HE FINISHED WITH THEM. AND THEY WERE WEEKS IN DYING.
BUT I ESCAPED--TO SPEND MORE THAN THREE DECADES HUNTING THE MONSTER. ONLY HIS SCREAMS WILL QUIET THE SCREAMS OF MY LOVED ONES THAT I HEAR, EVEN NOW.



LAND...
THE ISLAND...


BAM!

:KOFF:
SHE'S BREATHING! SHE'S COMING AROUND!
WHERE... WHERE AM I?
WHERE ELSE? THIS IS OLD MAN'S EISENBLUTH'S TURF!
OUR DAD'S SWINGING A DEAL WITH THAT OLD GOAT, SO MY BROTHER AND ME, WE GOT THE RUN OF THE BEACH.
THAT'S A NASTY CUT ON YOUR HEAD THERE. LUCKY WE HAD A FIRST AID KIT IN OUR DUNE BUGGY, HUH?
DUNE BUGGY...
YOU OKAY, LADY?
HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU? I--UFF!
STEADY, LADY.
MY--MY EAR RING! I HAD IT WHEN I STOOD UP. OH, DEAR!
IT'S WORTH SO MUCH TO ME...
NO SWEAT. WE'LL FIND IT.
MUST BE IN THE SAND SOMEWHERE...
FOUND IT! I FOUND...
HEY!

IT'S CROAKED.
WHAT'S THE OLD MAN FEEDING THESE CRITTERS, ANYWAY?
THAT'S THE SECOND ONE TO BUY IT TONIGHT.
YOU THOUGHT THAT SINKING MY SHIP WOULD STOP ME, MONSTER.
YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE SAFE.
ALL THE DEMONS OF HELL COULDN'T KEEP ME FROM YOU, MONSTER.
I WILL HEAR YOU SCREAM.
BLAM BLAM

THE LEGS... THEY HAVE HAD NO FEELING FOR YEARS, NOW.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOUNG MAN?
HAVE I MADE YOU ANGRY AT ME? CAUSED YOU HARM?
CAN'T REMEMBER... SO LITTLE I CAN REMEMBER...
IT'S THE DRUGS, YOU KNOW. THE DRUGS THEY GIVE ME FOR THE ANGINA. MAKES THINKING SO HARD...
WOULD LIKE A BATH YES. A BATH
NICE, WARM BATH
THAT WOULD BE NICE.
PLEASE FORGIVE AN OLD MAN'S INDULGENCE, ELEKTRA. HE WAS YOURS TO KILL. BUT MY PLEASURES ARE FEW, THESE DAYS.
AND IT HAS BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME SINCE I HAVE SHOT A JEW.

CREATED, WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK MILLER

LETTERS BY JIM NOVAK

SHADOW HUNTER

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NEAL ADAMS
DENNIS FRANCIS

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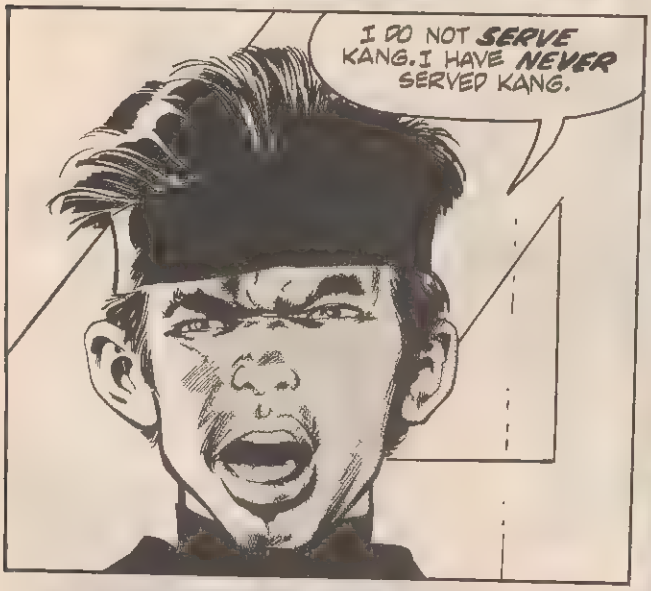
VROOOOOOMMMMM...
74-B
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAVE TO STAND GUARD HERE ALL DAY. WITH ALL THE ARTILLERY THEY'VE GOT UP AT THE FRONT GATES, THE ENEMY'D NEED A WHOLE LOUSY ARMY TO PENETRATE THIS FAR INTO THE BASE.
AND ON TOP OF THAT, WE'VE GOT THOSE EAR-BUSTIN' FIGHTER JETS CONSTANTLY SWEEPING THE GROUND FROM ABOVE.
OURS IS NOT TO QUESTION WHY, JOHNNIE. OURS IS TO STAND AT ATTENTION AND REMAIN ALERT. PERIOD.
ALERT FOR WHAT? THE SWEAT CRAWLIN DOWN OUR BACKS?
NOW DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FORGOTTON THE BIG BRASS' INDOCTRINATION ALREADY? ABOUT HOW THIS IS THE A-NUMBER-ONE MOST IMPORTANT MISSILE BASE IN THE FAR EAST--? AND HOW WE MUST PROTECT IT AT ALL COSTS--INCLUDING THE RISK OF LETTING OUR GUNG HO HANG OUT--?
SO HOW COME WE WERE PLAYIN' CARDS
BECAUSE YESTERDAY WAS YESTERDAY AND TODAY IS THE BIG DAY, BUDDY-BOY--THE DAY WHEN ALL THOSE GLORIOUS MISSILES OF OURS GET TESTED FOR MECHANICAL APTITUDE AND WARHEAD INTELLIGENCE.
NAVY
WELL YOU CAN LAUGH IT UP ALL YOU WANT-- I STILL SAY THIS GUARD JAZZ IS A WASTE OF LEG MUSCLES!
ASIDE FROM THOSE JETS UP THERE, THIS PLACE IS A QUIET AS...
HAI-YAHHH
KIYAIIEEE
HUU
HYAAA

JACK -- BEHIND US... FROM INSIDE THE BASE.
HYAHH-
AH-
OFFF...
-HAH!
CHRIST! WHO ARE THESE CLOWNS ?!
KLICK-KLAK
WHACK
AAA

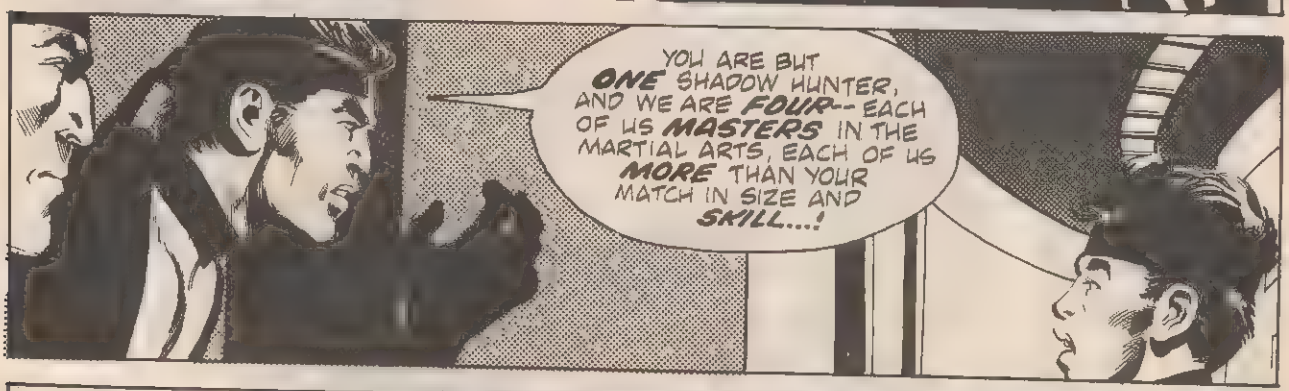
ALL R.GHT. COME-- QUICKLY.
THEY WERE THE LAST TWO GUARDS?
YES. ONLY YESTERDAY, I PLAYED CARDS WITH THE FOOLS. THEY NEVER EVEN SUSPECTED.
BUT COME WE MUST HURRY NOW...THE MISSILE TEST WILL BEGIN IN LESS THAN FOUR MINUTES.
THE CONTROL CENTER IS THIS WAY.
OHHHHHHHHH?...
THERE--THAT DOOR AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR. THE ROOM WILL BE STAFFED WITH AT LEAST A DOZEN TECHNICIANS. WE MUST ENTER SWIFTLY, AND OVERCOME THEM BEFORE THEY REALIZE...

WAIT! THERE ARE ONLY FOUR OF US... THE SHADOW HUNTER IS MISSING.
THE LITTLE ONE...GONE...?
PERHAPS... WITH HIS SHORT LEGS...HE COULD NOT MAINTAIN OUR PACE.
HUHN. IF HE IS CAUGHT, OUR ENTIRE UNDERGROUND PRO-PROGRAM WILL BE LOST. GENERAL KANG WOULD NOT BE PLEASED...
BUT ON THE OTHER HAND. IF WE DO NOT-- SABOTAGE THE TEST AND DESTROY THE AMERICAN MISSILES BY STRIKING NOW... KANG WILL BE EVEN MORE DISPLEASED.
YES...HE WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE ALL FOUR OF US SLAIN... VERY SLOWLY.
THEN IT IS AGREED. WHETHER THE SHADOW HUNTER HAS BEEN CAPTURED OR NOT, WE MAY HESITATE NO LONGER...
WAIT, AROUND THE CORNER... I HEARD SOMETHING...
ONLY BECAUSE I WISHED YOU TO HEAR...FOR AS YOU WELL KNOW, KWAI NINJAS MAY SCREAM IN SILENCE.
SHADOW-HUNTER!
I HAVE BEEN SO CALLED.

BUT--BUT YOU BLOCK OUR PATH--?!
AS YOUR ENEMY.
BUT GENERAL KANG WILL HAVE YOU DESTROYED--!


I DO NOT SERVE KANG. I HAVE NEVER SERVED KANG.

YOU ARE A FOOL LITTLE ONE
THEN IT'S A FOOL WHO WILL END YOUR MISSION OF SABOTAGE... WHERE YOU STAND!


YOU ARE BUT ONE SHADOW HUNTER, AND WE ARE FOUR-- EACH OF US MASTERS IN THE MARTIAL ARTS, EACH OF US MORE THAN YOUR MATCH IN SIZE AND SKILL...!

THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, SHINGU. WORDS WILL NOT DECIDE THE CONTEST.

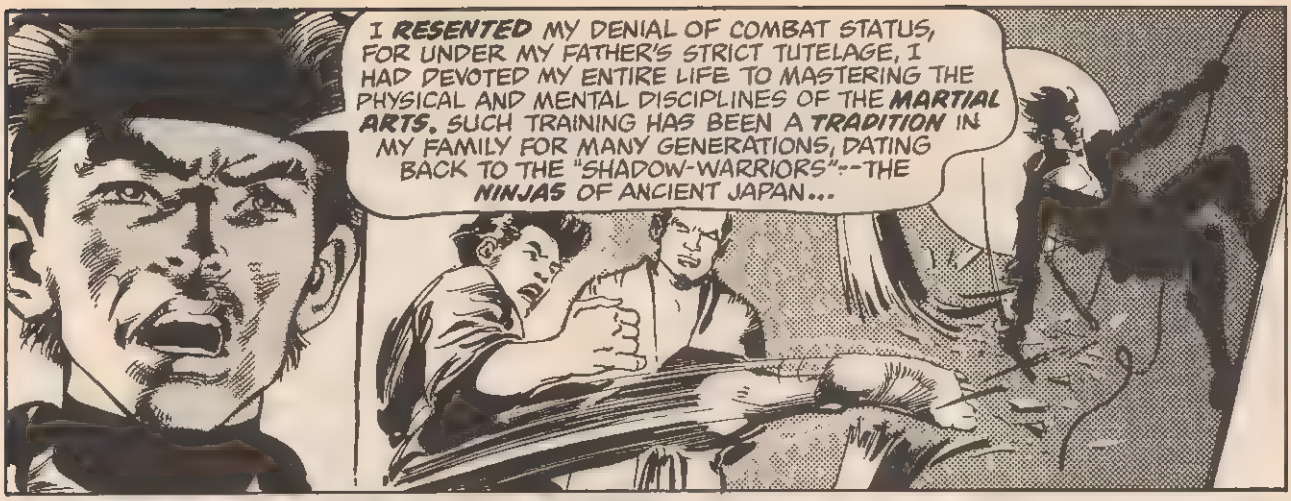
VERY WELL, SHADOW-HUNTER... THEN WE SHALL NEAR YOUR SCREAMS OF SILENCE.
ATTACK HIM-- TOGETHER!!
WHUD WHUD WHUD
WHUD WHUD WHUD WHUD
THUD
THUD
WHUD

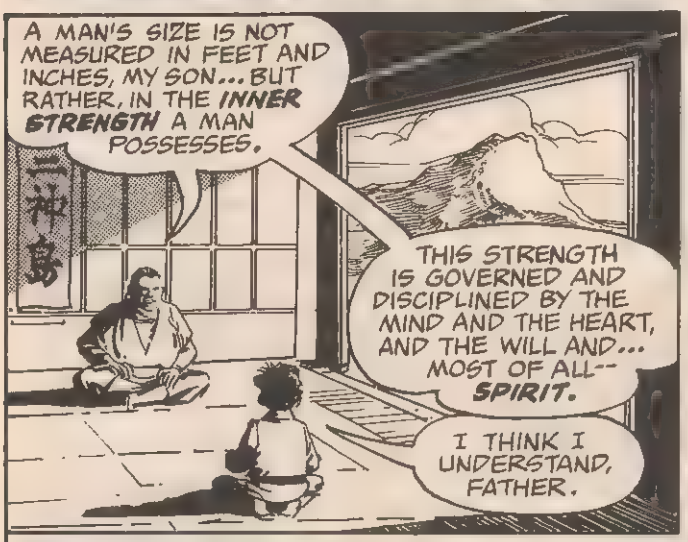
MY HEAD STILL FEELS LIKE IT WAS CLOBBERED BY A TWO-TON ANVIL...!
NEVER MIND THAT, JOHNNIE--! LOOK WHAT'S GOIN' ON UP AHEAD!!
HOLY SMOKES--! WHAT A BRAWL--LOOKS LIKE ONE O' THOSE KUNG FU FLICKS--ONLY WORSE! I NEVER REALIZED THEY ACTUALLY MOVED THAT FAST THEY'RE LIKE BLURS--!
WAIT A MINUTE--IT'S JUST THAT ONE LITTLE GUY AGAINST ALL FOUR O' THOSE BIG DUDES--!
YOU'RE RIGHT--AND WHAT A FEISTY LITTLE SCRAPPER!
HE CAN'T BE MORE'N FOUR FEET TALL--AND HE'S BEATIN' THE PANTS OFFA ALL FOUR O' THOSE LUGS YOU FIGURE HE'S ON OUR SIDE--?

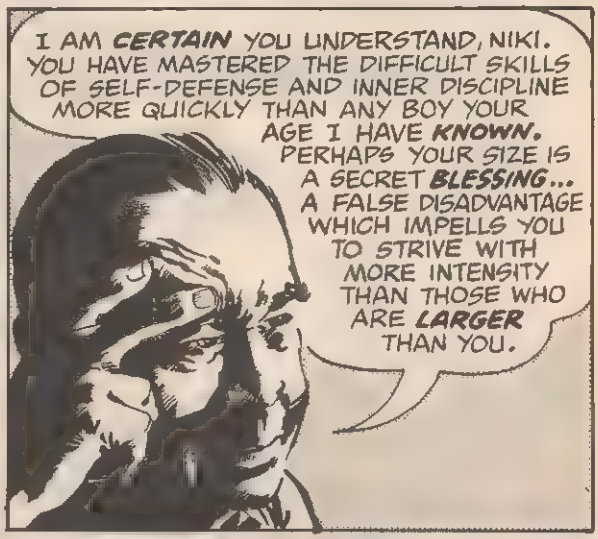
HE'S GOTTA BE IF HE'S FIGHTIN' THE ONES WHO PUNCHED US OUT..
YEAH-- AND IS HE EVER FIGHTING. GUESS WE GOTTA WAIT IT OUT, THEN ... CAN'T SHOOT, THE WAY HE'S WEAVIN' THROUGH THOSE GUYS LIKE GREASED LIGHTING...
FLEE--! WE MUST AVOID CAPTURE! THE MISSION IS LOST! THE TEST HAS ALREADY STARTED!!
WE CAN'T LET 'EM GET AWAY--! THE CRAZY LITTLE SQUIRT IS CHASING THEM. WE CAN'T SHOOT WITHOUT HITTING HIM--!
OUR GAS CANNISTERS, JOHNNIE...! HEAVE 'EM BEFORE THEY GET TOO FAR!!
RIGHT!
PING
WHOOSH
GAS
WHOOHMPH

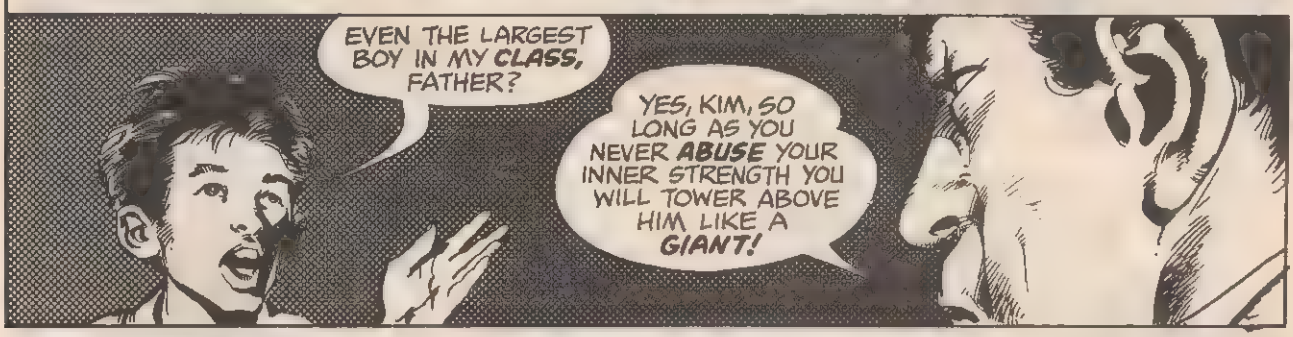
COME ON, FELLA-- SNAP OUT OF IT... COME ON... WAKE UP...
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE, STRAWN;... THAT MAN SHOULD BE BOUND DURING INTERROGATION.
I THOUGHT WE'D SETTLED THAT LT. HANES. YOU HEARD THE GUARDS' REPORT...
OHHHHHH...
HOLD IT.. HE'S COMING TO...
WHERE...?
YOU'RE SAFE... HERE IN THE BASE INTELLIGENCE OFFICE. I'M LIEUTENANT STRAWN, AND THIS IS LIEUTENANT HANES. WE'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS... IF YOU FEEL UP TO IT, WITH A HEADFUL OF THAT GAS..
KWAI... SHINGU... AND THE OTHERS?
ALL FOUR ARE N RETENTION. THEY WON'T BE GOING ANYWHERE FOR QUITE A WHILE.
ST
THEN I... SUCCEEDED ...IN STOPPING THEM?
THE MISSILE TEST WENT OFF PERFECTLY. THAT'S WHAT WE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT. BOTH KWAI AND CHOU WORKED HERE ON THE BASE IN POSITIONS OF HIGH TRUST SO OBVIOUSLY THE SABOTAGE ATTEMPT WAS AN INSIDE JOB. AND YET NO ONE HERE ON THE BASE SEEMS TO KNOW A THING ABOUT YOU.
DO YOU WANT TO TELL US US ABOUT IT?

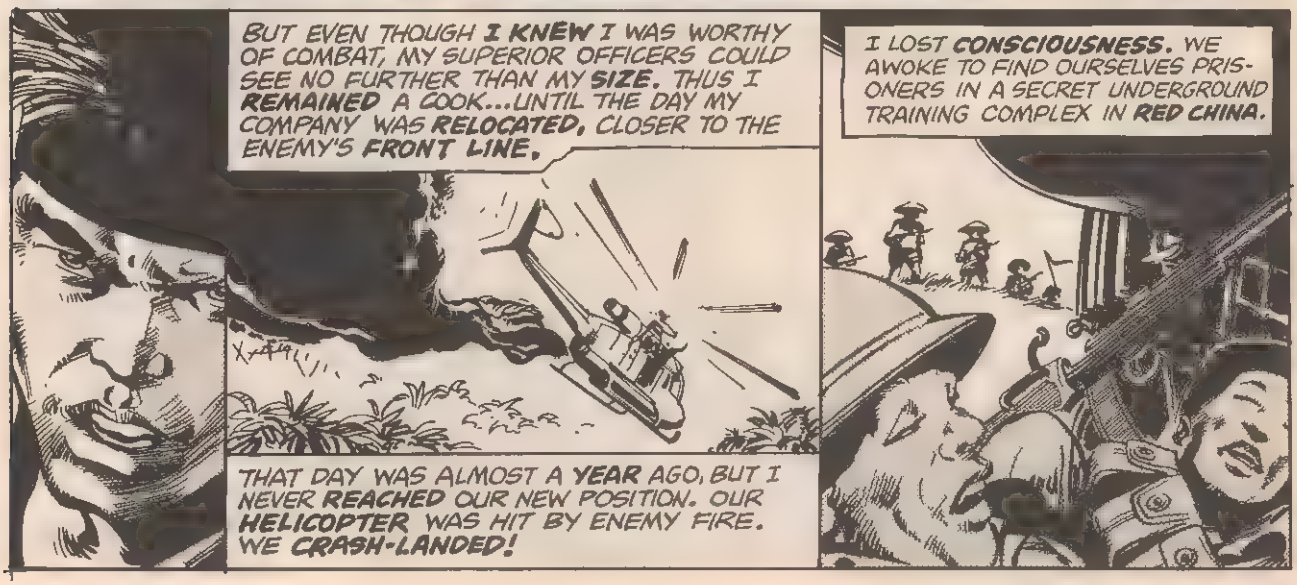
WITHOUT TRUTH SERUM YET--! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I'LL IGNORE THAT HANES... BUT I'D ADVISE YOU NOT TO INTERRUPT AGAIN...
HMPH!
DO YOU WANT TO START WITH YOUR NAME?
NIKI JAKOSAN. MY PARENTS ARE FROM KYOTO, JAPAN-- BUT I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN HAWAII... I AM A LOYAL AMERICAN, ALTHOUGH I HAVE NEVER LOST SIGHT OF MY JAPANESE HERITAGE.
THE WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA HAD GROWN SERIOUS BY THE TIME I WAS EIGHTEEN!
I TRIED TO ENLIST IN THE MARINE CORPS...
SORRY, JAKOSAN, YOU'RE WAY BELOW THE HEIGHT REQUIREMENT! NEXT!
BUT I WAS DETERMINED TO SERVE MY COUNTRY, AND WAS FINALLY ACCEPTED IN THE ARMY...
ALL RIGHT, JAKOSAN... HERE, YOUR PAPERS. YOU REPORT FOR DUTY AT THE INDUCTION CENTER NEXT THURSDAY... SEVEN A.M.!
YES, SIR!
BUT ONCE I HAD BEEN STATIONED SOUTH OF DA NANG, I FOUND THAT THE ARMY WAS NOT WHAT I HAD ANTICIPATED. BECAUSE OF MY SIZE I WAS CONSIDERED UNFIT FOR COMBAT DUTY...AND WAS MADE A COOK...
CHARLIE CO. MESS TENT
AND WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED WITH THAT JAKOSAN YOU CAN START PEELIN' THOSE SPUDS!
YES, SIR!
WHAT DID YOU SAY JAKOSAN?
YES, SIR!

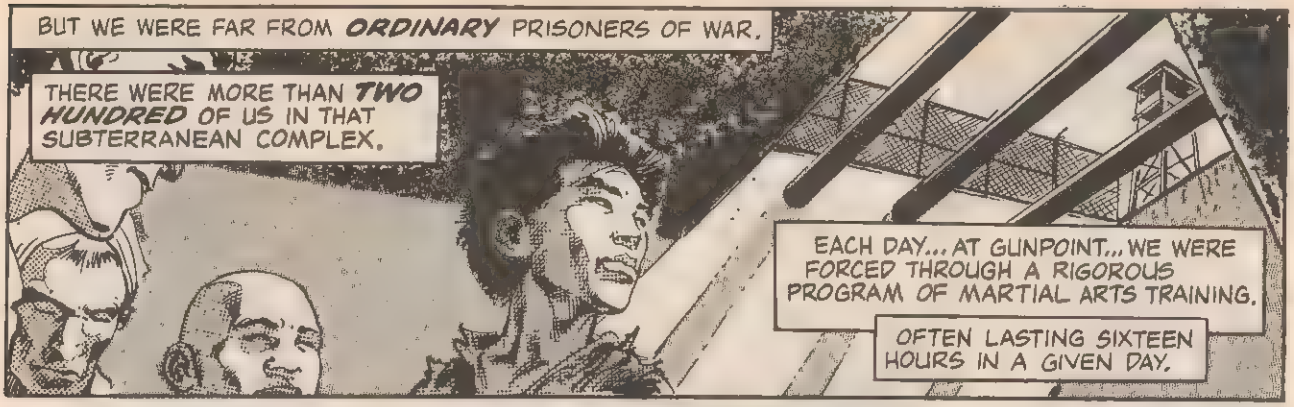

I RESENTED MY DENIAL OF COMBAT STATUS, FOR UNDER MY FATHER'S STRICT TUTELAGE, I HAD DEVOTED MY ENTIRE LIFE TO MASTERING THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DISCIPLINES OF THE MARTIAL ARTS. SUCH TRAINING HAS BEEN A TRADITION IN MY FAMILY FOR MANY GENERATIONS, DATING BACK TO THE "SHADOW-WARRIORS"--THE NINJAS OF ANCIENT JAPAN...


A MAN'S SIZE IS NOT MEASURED IN FEET AND INCHES, MY SON... BUT RATHER, IN THE INNER STRENGTH A MAN POSSESSES.
THIS STRENGTH IS GOVERNED AND DISCIPLINED BY THE MIND AND THE HEART, AND THE WILL AND... MOST OF ALL-- SPIRIT.
I THINK I UNDERSTAND, FATHER.


I AM CERTAIN YOU UNDERSTAND, NIKI. YOU HAVE MASTERED THE DIFFICULT SKILLS OF SELF-DEFENSE AND INNER DISCIPLINE MORE QUICKLY THAN ANY BOY YOUR AGE I HAVE KNOWN. PERHAPS YOUR SIZE IS A SECRET BLESSING... A FALSE DISADVANTAGE WHICH IMPELLS YOU TO STRIVE WITH MORE INTENSITY THAN THOSE WHO ARE LARGER THAN YOU.


EVEN THE LARGEST BOY IN MY CLASS, FATHER?
YES, KIM, SO LONG AS YOU NEVER ABUSE YOUR INNER STRENGTH YOU WILL TOWER ABOVE HIM LIKE A GIANT!


BUT EVEN THOUGH I KNEW I WAS WORTHY OF COMBAT, MY SUPERIOR OFFICERS COULD SEE NO FURTHER THAN MY SIZE. THUS I REMAINED A COOK...UNTIL THE DAY MY COMPANY WAS RELOCATED, CLOSER TO THE ENEMY'S FRONT LINE.
THAT DAY WAS ALMOST A YEAR AGO, BUT I NEVER REACHED OUR NEW POSITION. OUR HELICOPTER WAS HIT BY ENEMY FIRE. WE CRASH-LANDED!
I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS. WE AWOKE TO FIND OURSELVES PRISONERS IN A SECRET UNDERGROUND TRAINING COMPLEX IN RED CHINA.

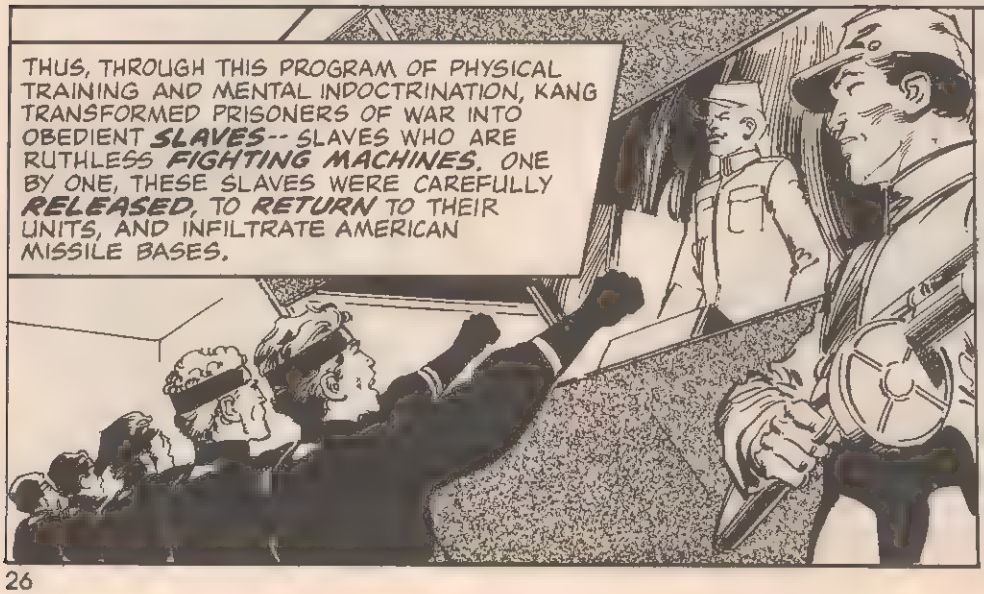

BUT WE WERE FAR FROM ORDINARY PRISONERS OF WAR.
THERE WERE MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED OF US IN THAT SUBTERRANEAN COMPLEX.
EACH DAY... AT GUNPOINT... WE WERE FORCED THROUGH A RIGOROUS PROGRAM OF MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING.
OFTEN LASTING SIXTEEN HOURS IN A GIVEN DAY.

MOST OF THE OTHER PRISONERS FOUND IT AN UNBEARABLE ORDEAL... TO ME IT WAS INVIGORATING...

AT NIGHT WE WERE FORCED INTO CUBICLES, TO ENDURE A NEW FORM OF... RATHER UNIQUE...
...ELECTRONIC AND AUDIO BRAINWASHING...

I AM KANG... YOUR MASTER! YOU WILL OBEY KANG! NO ONE BUT KANG!
KANG KANG KANG

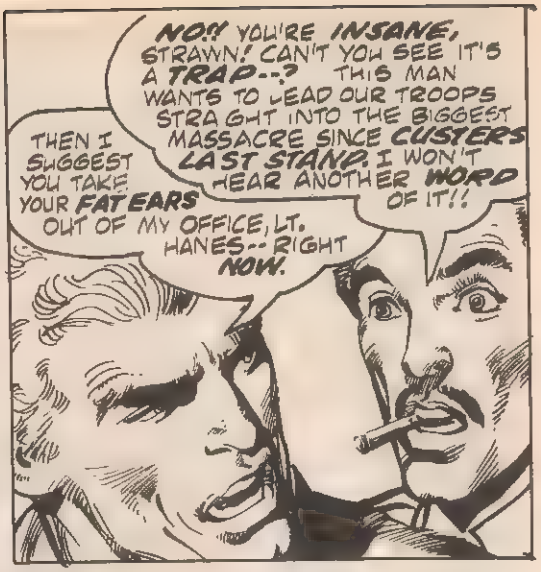
I... WILL... OBEY... KANG... KANG... KANG.

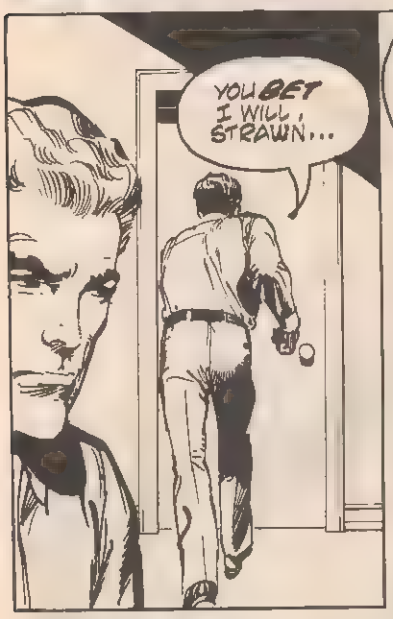

THUS, THROUGH THIS PROGRAM OF PHYSICAL TRAINING AND MENTAL INDOCTRINATION, KANG TRANSFORMED PRISONERS OF WAR INTO OBEDIENT SLAVES-- SLAVES WHO ARE RUTHLESS FIGHTING MACHINES. ONE BY ONE, THESE SLAVES WERE CAREFULLY RELEASED, TO RETURN TO THEIR UNITS, AND INFILTRATE AMERICAN MISSILE BASES.

BELIEVING I WAS FINALLY CONVERTED TO KANG, I WAS RELEASED TODAY...

AND THWARTED YOUR FIRST MISSION.
YES, KANG BELIEVED ONLY WHAT I WANTED HIM TO BELIEVE. THE INNER STRENGTH MY FATHER SO OFTEN SPOKE OF ENABLED ME TO RESIST KANG'S BRAINWASHING TACTICS,,, WHILE PRETENDING I HAD BEEN CONVERTED TO GAIN ESCAPE.
A GOOD THING YOU DID, NIKI.
YOU MEAN YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE HIS PREPOSTEROUS STORY--?! IT'S ABSURD! HE'S AN INFILTRATOR WHO'S GRASPING FOR STRAWS.
I'M WARNING YOU FOR THE LAST TIME, LT. HANES. WE'RE HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS MAN'S STORY-- NOT TO CALL HIM A LIAR.
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, LT. STRAWN. I FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE MYSELF-- PARTICULARLY WHEN I LEARNED THAT KANG'S INCREDIBLE SECRET ACTIVITIES ARE LARGELY UNKNOWN EVEN TO THE LEADERS OF HIS OWN COUNTRY...
WHAT--? YOU MEAN THE RED CHINESE AREN'T EVEN AWARE OF THIS PROGRAM--?
THEY ARE AWARE OF THE COMPLEX, AND WHAT IT IS SUPPOSEDLY USED FOR, WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW IS THAT KANG IS WORKING ONLY FOR HIMSELF-- FOR POWER. AND HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO GET THAT POWER, LT. STRAWN.
SO IT SEEMS... I'M AFRAID IT'S WORSE THAN IT SEEMS, LIEUTENANT, THOUGH NOT IRREPARABLE.
OH?
THERE ARE STILL ROUGHLY SIXTY TO A HUNDRED OF KANG'S UNDERCOVER AGENTS WORKING ON THIS AND OTHER AMERICAN MISSILE BASES... BUT UNFORTUNATELY NO WAY OF IDENTIFYING THEM.
AND YET YOU SAY THERE'S HOPE...?
YES. SINCE THERE IS NO WAY TO IDENTIFY THE AGENTS, OUR ONLY WAY OF ENDING THEIR THREAT IS TO SEVER THEIR CONNECTION WITH KANG-- STOP THEM FROM RECEIVING FURTHER ORDERS FROM KANG...

AND YOU KNOW HOW TO DO THIS?
WELL, I KNOW WHERE KANG'S COMMUNICATION CENTER IS LOCATED, IF WE COULD DESTROY IT...


NO!! YOU'RE INSANE, STRAWN! CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S A TRAP--? THIS MAN WANTS TO LEAD OUR TROOPS STRAIGHT INTO THE BIGGEST MASSACRE SINCE CUSTER'S LAST STAND. I WON'T HEAR ANOTHER WORD OF IT!!
THEN I SUGGEST YOU TAKE YOUR FAT EARS OUT OF MY OFFICE, LT. HANES-- RIGHT NOW.


YOU BET I WILL, STRAWN...

AND I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO THE BASE COMMANDER. SO IF YOU'RE STILL PLANNING THIS INSANE FORAY INTO ENEMY TERRITORY, BE PREPARED TO LEAD AN INFANTRY OF ONE!!

YOU AND ME, NIKI. YOU GAME--?
WHENEVER YOU ARE READY, LIEUTENANT.

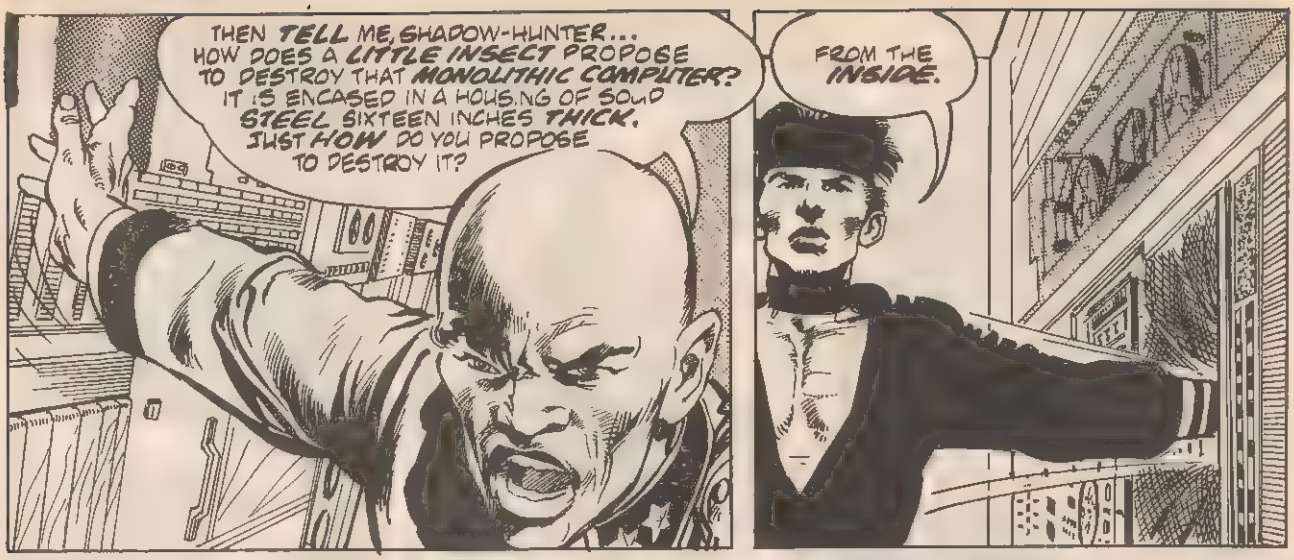
THEN LET'S GRAB A PLANE BEFORE HANES CONVINCES THE COMMANDER TO GROUND US!

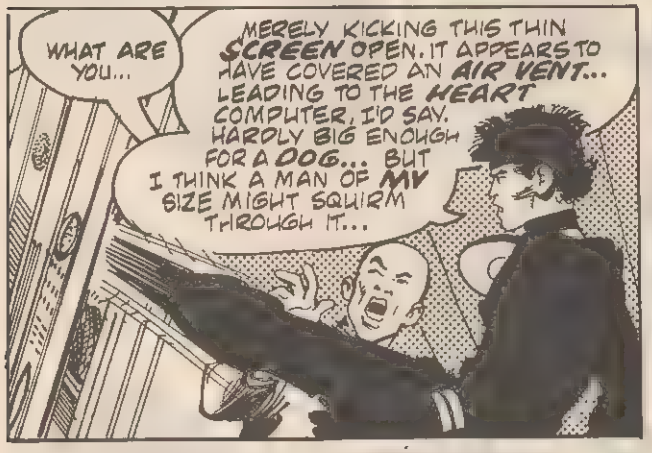
LOOKS LIKE YOU'LL BE SEEING SOME COMBAT DUTY IN THIS ARMY AFTER ALL, SOLDIER.
YES, SIR!

IS IT DOWN THERE, NIKI?
YES, THAT IS IT...
D35
HOW DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO GET IN THERE, ANYWAY?
KANG DID NOT GIVE ME THE CODE-NAME "SHADOW-HUNTER" WITHOUT REASON, LIEUTENANT.
ALL RIGHT-- IF YOU SAY SO. NOW JUST REMEMBER TO KEEP THAT MINIATURE RECEIVER TUCKED IN YOUR EAR-- YOU'LL HEAR MY VOICE LIKE A WHISPER INSIDE YOUR HEAD. AND AS LONG AS YOU KEEP THAT MINI-TRANSMITTER PINNED TO YOUR COLLAR, I'LL BE ABLE TO HEAR ANY WHISPER YOU WANT TO TOSS MY WAY...
RIGHT. I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I NEED TO BE PICKED UP... AND THANKS FOR TRUSTING ME, SIR.
HEY, CUT OUT THE "SIR" STUFF. IF YOU MANAGE TO PULL THIS OFF, I'LL TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU.
I'LL HOLD YOU TO THAT PROMISE, LIEUTENANT.
ALL RIGHT-- WE'RE APPROACHING THE CENTER NOW. READY FOR YOUR JUMP?
READY.
THEN HIT THE SILK, SHADOW-HUNTER.
WHUDD

ARE YOU DOWN NIKI?
RIGHT ON THE ROOF, LIEUTENANT.
AND HOW DO YOU FIGURE TO GET IN FROM THERE?
I WAS THINKING OF A DIRECT ENTRANCE THE ROOF IS WOOD SOMEWHAT OLD. IT SEEMS KANG HAS CAMOUFLAGED HIS COMMUNICATIONS CENTER A LITTLE TOO WELL.
IF I STAMP DOWN HARD ENOUGH...
SKAK
WHO IS THAT?! WHO IS UP THERE--?!!
THAT'S KANG HIMSELF LIEUTENANT. GUESS I'D BETTER DROP IN ON HIM... AND HIS THREE OR FOUR BODY GUARDS...
GOOD LUCK, NIKI?
IT IS ME, GENERAL KANG... YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT.
KILL HIM--KILL HIM AT ONCE!!

AS A FRIEND OF MINE RECENTLY SAID, IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S JUST YOU AND ME GENERAL KANG.
YOU ARE A FOOL, SHADOW-HUNTER! YOUR ACTIVITIES AT THE MISSILE BASE WERE REPORTED TO ME. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO HERE?
DESTROY THAT COMPUTER OF YOURS OVER THERE, FOR ONE THING.
HAH! YOU--? DO YOU REMEMBER HOW I CALLED YOU "LITTLE INSECT" DURING YOUR TRAINING, SHADOW-HUNTER?
I REMEMBER.


THEN TELL ME, SHADOW-HUNTER... HOW DOES A LITTLE INSECT PROPOSE TO DESTROY THAT MONOLITHIC COMPUTER? IT IS ENCASED IN A HOUSING OF SOLID STEEL SIXTEEN INCHES THICK. JUST HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO DESTROY IT?
FROM THE INSIDE.

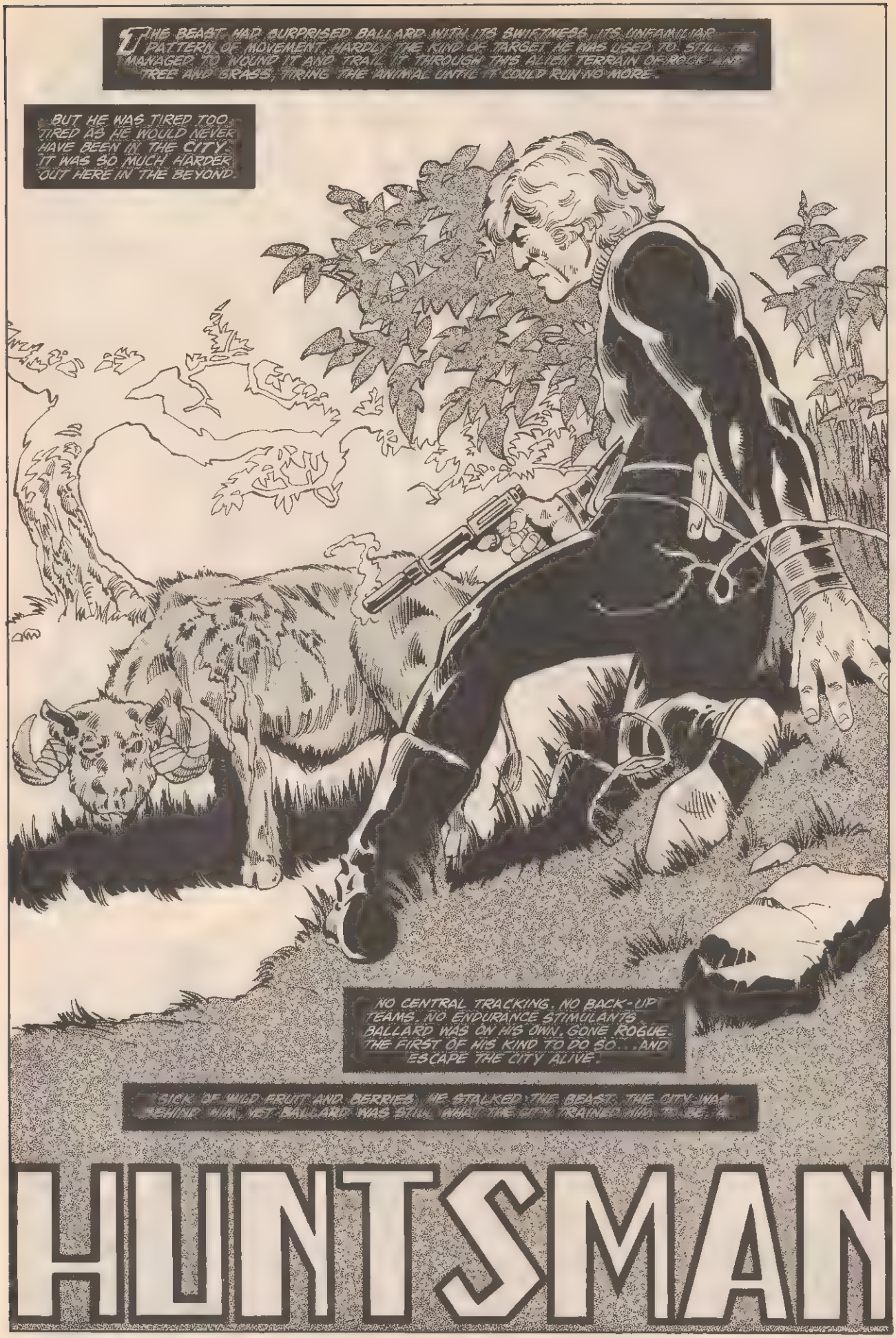

WHAT ARE YOU...
MERELY KICKING THIS THIN SCREEN OPEN. IT APPEARS TO HAVE COVERED AN AIR VENT... LEADING TO THE HEART COMPUTER, I'D SAY. HARDLY BIG ENOUGH FOR A DOG... BUT I THINK A MAN OF MY SIZE MIGHT SQUIRM THROUGH IT...

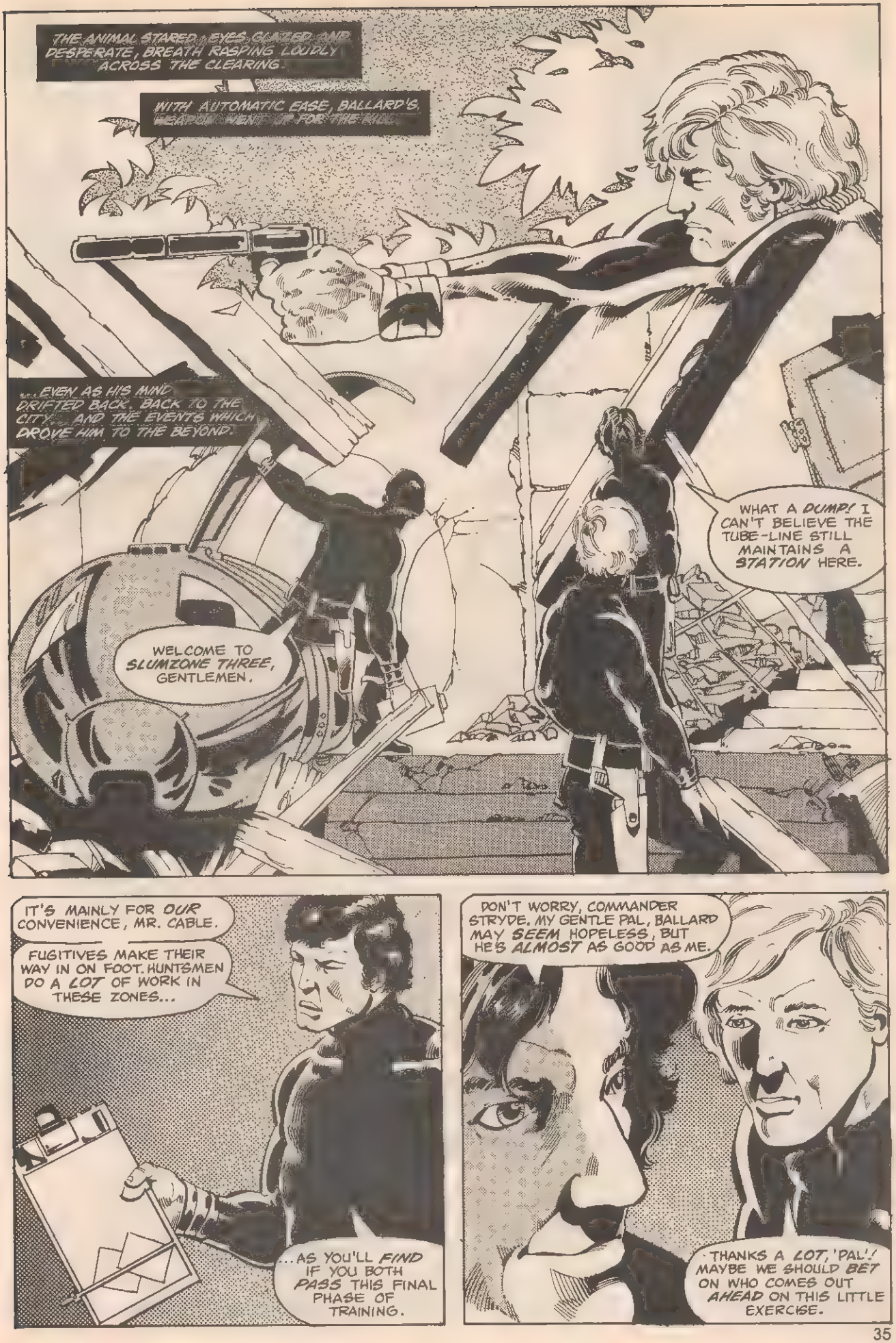
STOP.. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
YES, NIKI... WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU DOING? THAT GENERAL KANG OF YOURS SOUNDS LIKE HE'S HAVING A FIT...!

AND WELL HE SHOULD, LT. STRAWN. YOU MIGHT FIND THIS A LITTLE FANTASTIC, I'M NOW INSIDE THE HUGE COMPUTER. I'VE NEVER SEEN A MORE AMAZING SIGHT-- STRANGE ELECTRONIC THINGS SPINNING AND CLICKING AND WHIRLING ALL AROUND ME. BUT A FEW WELL PLACED KUNG FU PUNCHES AND KICKS SHOULD PUT THEM TO REST...

HAIIIII!

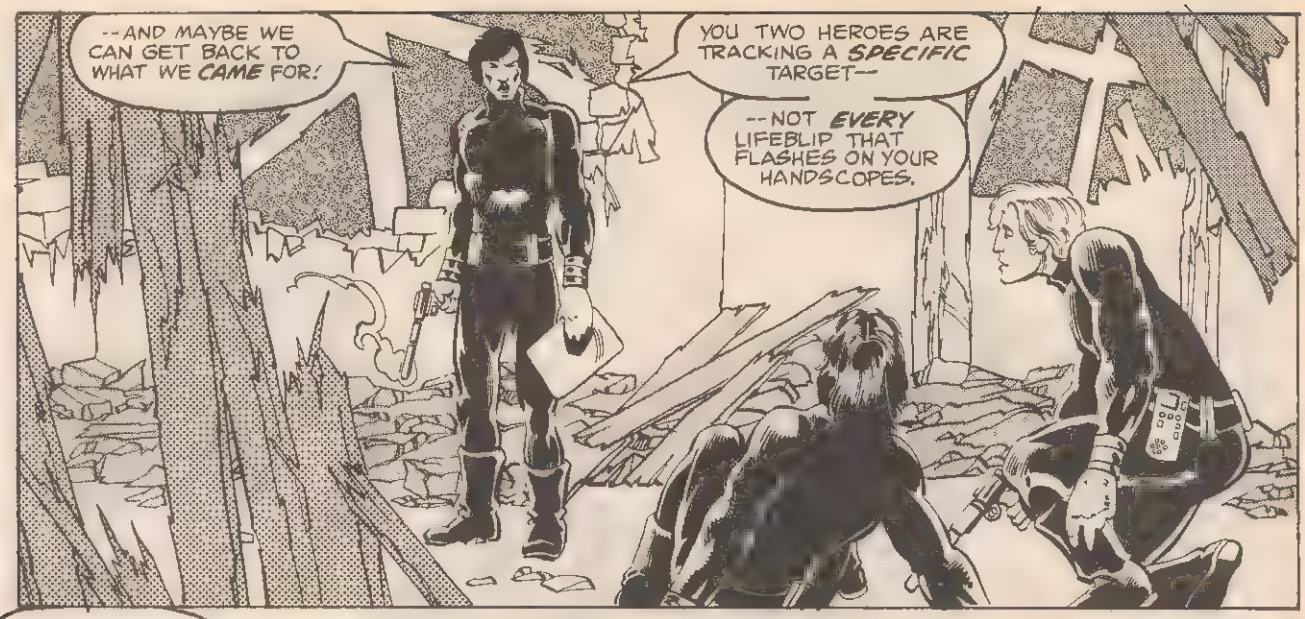
IS IT OVER NIKI? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES, LIEUTENANT, I'M SQUIRMING BACK OUT THE VENT NOW...
I'M OUT... BUT KANG'S ESCAPED LIEUTENANT--NO DOUBT BACK TO HIS UNDERGROUND COMPLEX IN CHINA. I DON'T THINK I'D BETTER FOLLOW HIM NOW...
OF COURSE NOT, NIKI, YOU'VE COMPLETED THE MISSION WE SET OUT TO DO. WE'VE STOPPED KANG--AT LEAST FOR NOW. COME ON OUT TO BE PICKED UP...
I'M ON MY WAY.
OH NIKI... THERE'S JUST ONE QUESTION...
WHAT IS THAT LIEUTENANT?
WHAT'S YOUR FIRST ORDER, BOSS?
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA... WELL...
I THINK I'LL HAVE YOU ASSIGN LT. HANES TO A MONTH OF K.P. DUTY.
END.

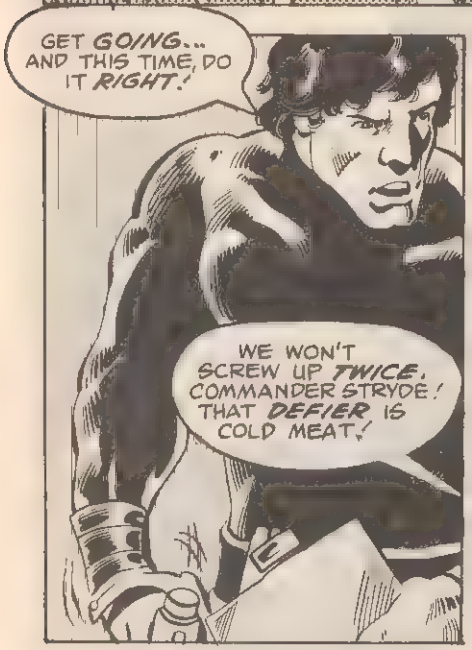

THE BEAST HAD SURPRISED BALLARD WITH ITS SWIFTNESS, ITS UNFAMILIAR PATTERN OF MOVEMENT. HARDLY THE KIND OF TARGET HE WAS USED TO. STILL, HE MANAGED TO WOUND IT AND TRAIL IT THROUGH THIS ALIEN TERRAIN OF ROCK, TREE AND GRASS, TIRING THE ANIMAL UNTIL IT COULD RUN NO MORE.
BUT HE WAS TIRED TOO. TIRED AS HE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN IN THE CITY. IT WAS SO MUCH HARDER OUT HERE IN THE BEYOND.
NO CENTRAL TRACKING. NO BACK-UP TEAMS. NO ENDURANCE STIMULANTS. BALLARD WAS ON HIS OWN, GONE ROGUE. THE FIRST OF HIS KIND TO DO SO... AND ESCAPE THE CITY ALIVE.
SICK OF WILD FRUIT AND BERRIES, HE STALKED THE BEAST. THE CITY WAS BEHIND HIM, YET BALLARD WAS STILL WHAT THE CITY TRAINED HIM TO BE.
HUNTSMAN

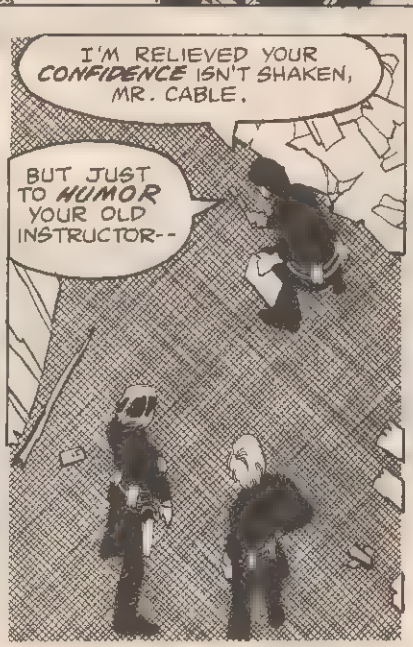

THE ANIMAL STARED, EYES GLAZED AND DESPERATE, BREATH RASPING LOUDLY ACROSS THE CLEARING.
WITH AUTOMATIC EASE, BALLARD'S [illegible] WENT UP FOR THE KILL.
...EVEN AS HIS MIND DRIFTED BACK, BACK TO THE CITY... AND THE EVENTS WHICH DROVE HIM TO THE BEYOND.
WELCOME TO SLUMZONE THREE, GENTLEMEN.
WHAT A DUMP! I CAN'T BELIEVE THE TUBE-LINE STILL MAINTAINS A STATION HERE.
IT'S MAINLY FOR OUR CONVENIENCE, MR. CABLE.
FUGITIVES MAKE THEIR WAY IN ON FOOT. HUNTSMEN DO A LOT OF WORK IN THESE ZONES...
...AS YOU'LL FIND IF YOU BOTH PASS THIS FINAL PHASE OF TRAINING.
DON'T WORRY, COMMANDER STRYDE. MY GENTLE PAL, BALLARD MAY SEEM HOPELESS, BUT HE'S ALMOST AS GOOD AS ME.
THANKS A LOT, 'PAL'! MAYBE WE SHOULD BET ON WHO COMES OUT AHEAD ON THIS LITTLE EXERCISE.

STOW THE BRAVADO, MR. BALLARD. YOU TWO CAN DIE FROM THIS 'LITTLE EXERCISE'!
BEYOND THAT SHIELD-DOOR IS ONE OF THE CITY'S MOST DANGEROUS AREAS.
I'LL ACT AS SUPPORT, BUT YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN. CENTRAL TRACKING REGISTERS A TARGET OUT THERE--
--PRIME OFFENDER. A DEFIER KILL SITUATION. KEY YOUR HANDSCOPES AND DON'T FOUL UP.
FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES THEY DIDN'T. THEN...
HOT SIGNAL! WHILE BALLARD WASTES TIME CONFIRMING IT WITH CENTRAL--
--I'M THE ONE WHO'S GONNA SCORE!
CABLE PRIDED HIMSELF FOR BEING FAST. SO DID SLUMZONE THREE'S MOST VICIOUS RESIDENTS.
RAT PACKERS!
IN THEORY, THEY WERE CHILDREN ARMED IN SUFFICIENT NUMBERS, SENSING A CHANCE FOR LOOT OR MERELY THRILLS...
...THEY WERE DEATH.

HANG ON, CABLE!--
KER-RASH
--HERE'S SALVATION FROM THE SIN OF OVEREAGERNESS!
'NOTHER HUNTSMAN! SCURRY... SPLIT!
NO, NO! JUST PULL BACK... STONE 'EM, TRASH 'EM!
BLASTED LITTLE RUIN-RUNNERS! WHY ARE THEY SUDDENLY SO BRAVE?
UH... BALLARD? I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND MY--
CABLE, YOU MUSHMIND...! THEY'VE GOT YOUR GUN!
FTAM
VEE-DOW
ASTUTE OBSERVATION, MR. BALLARD--
--MADE JUST A BIT LATE TO BE MUCH HELP STAYING ALIVE!
PDAM
BDOW
WLAM
NOW IF YOU'RE DONE PLAYING, I'LL SEND THE KIDDIES HOME--


--AND MAYBE WE CAN GET BACK TO WHAT WE CAME FOR!
YOU TWO HEROES ARE TRACKING A SPECIFIC TARGET--
--NOT EVERY LIFEBLIP THAT FLASHES ON YOUR HANDSCOPES.


GET GOING... AND THIS TIME, DO IT RIGHT!
WE WON'T SCREW UP TWICE, COMMANDER STRYDE! THAT DEFIER IS COLD MEAT!


I'M RELIEVED YOUR CONFIDENCE ISN'T SHAKEN, MR. CABLE.
BUT JUST TO HUMOR YOUR OLD INSTRUCTOR--

WHY NOT TAKE YOUR GUN--?
--IF YOU CAN HANG ON TO IT!

CHASTISED, THEY MOVE OUT SWIFTLY, SURELY...
AND...
THERE'S SOMETHING AHEAD.
CONFIRMED. CENTRAL TRACKING SAYS GO!

CABLE'S MAKING TOO MUCH NOISE TARGET'S MOVING MY WAY.
THANKS OL' BUDDY... YOU OWE ME. FIRST KILL'S GONNA BE...

--M-MINE!
WEAPON RISING, FINGER ON FIRING STUD... FROZE.
...BEHOLDING NOT A HOLOGRAPHIC TARGET SIMULATION AS IN PREVIOUS TRAINING...
...BUT AN ALL TOO LIFELIKE GIRL!
HE FROZE ONLY FOR AN INSTANT. BUT IN THAT INSTANT...
FRA KOW
CABLE...! YOU--
I ONLY DID WHAT YOU WEREN'T DOING, BALLARD. I--I-THE TARGET!
I-IT'S--
--AN ANDROID! AND LUCKY IT WAS... NEITHER OF YOU ARE READY FOR THE REAL THING!

THE CHEWING-OUT BEGUN BY COMMANDER STRYDE IN SLUMZONE THREE *CONTINUED*... ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE HUNTSMEN'S BARRACKS.

YOU TWO ARE AT THE *TOP* OF YOUR CLASS... THAT'S WHY I *PERSONALLY* TOOK OVER YOUR TRAINING. THE CITY *NEEDS* GOOD HUNTSMEN... AND IT TAKES *CARE* OF THEM.

YOU RETIRE AT 35 LIKE EVERYONE ELSE... BUT YOU GET *TEN YEARS* BEFORE CHECKING INTO THE *ORGAN BANK*. AND IF YOU'RE *REALLY* GOOD...

YOU MAKE THE *GOLDEN CIRCLE* FULL *LIFE* PRIVILEGES... JUST LIKE SENATE MEMBERS AND BUSINESS CHIEFS... NO TURNING INTO *SPARE PARTS*.

I'M *CLOSE* TO MAKING IT. AND IF YOU TWO REALIZE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL--

--*YOU'LL* MAKE IT, TOO! SURE, THE SYSTEM'S *TOUGH*, BUT SINCE THE BIG COLLAPSE--

--IT'S THE *BEST* ANYONE'S COME UP WITH. UNLESS YOU WANT TO BECOME A SLUMZONE DROPOUT--

--OR AN ACTUAL *DEFIER*, WHICH IS JUST ANOTHER WAY OF DYING *FAST*, GENTLEMEN!

--EITHER BY *OUR* GUNS, OR TRYING TO SURVIVE IN THE *BEYOND*.

BE EASIER FOR *ALL* OF US IF CABLE HERE WOULD JUST START *THINKING* BEFORE HE ACTS--

--AND YOU'D *STOP* THINKING WHEN IT'S *TIME* TO ACT, BALLARD!

BLAM

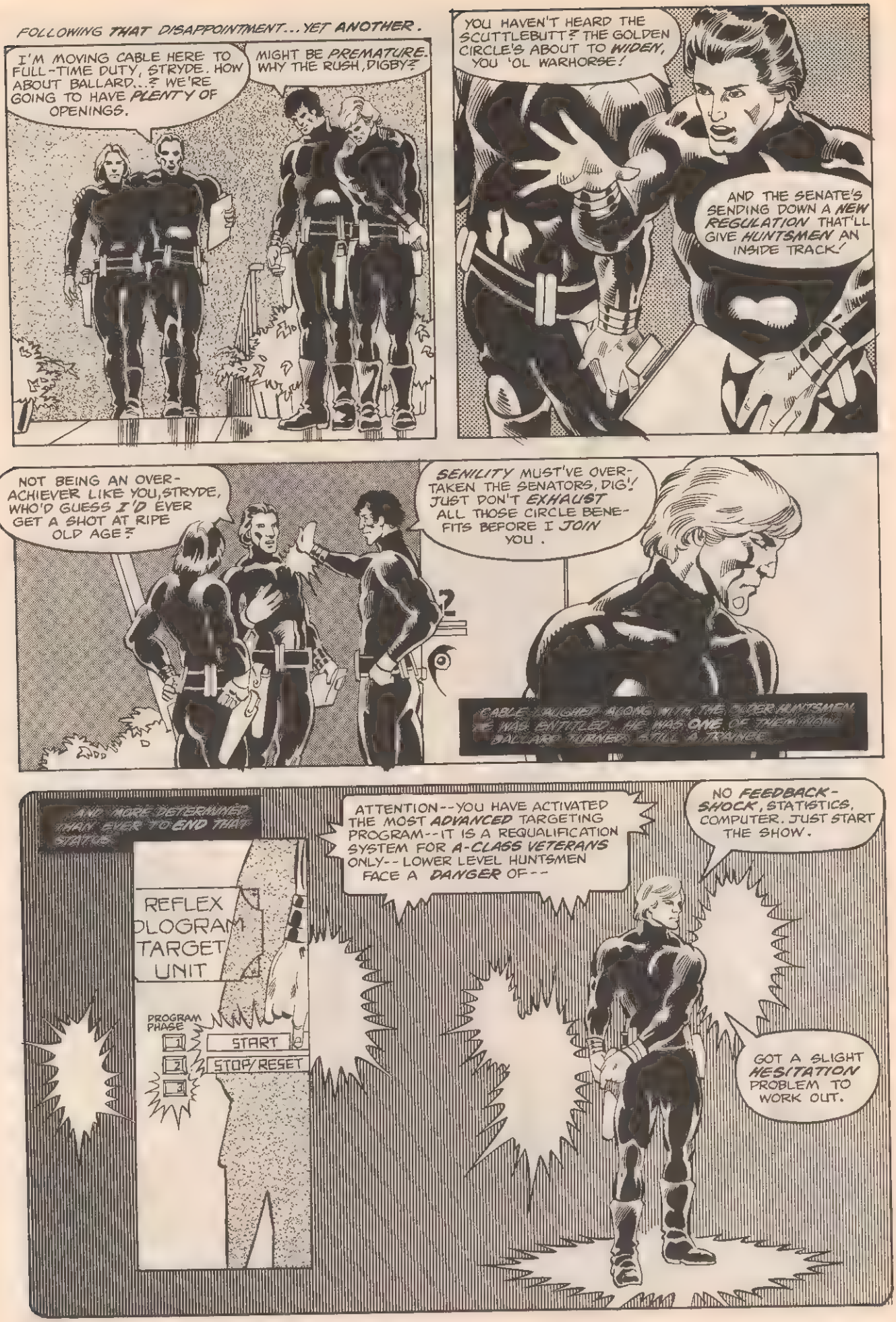
WORK ON IT, SONNY.

NOW COME ON. WE CAN STILL CATCH THE *MAIN EVENT* AT THE ARENA.

THE ARENA... LAST CHANCE FOR THOSE FACING RETIREMENT AND THE ORGAN BANKS.
ONE FINAL TRY AT BEING ADMITTED TO THE GOLDEN CIRCLE OF THE CITY'S RULING ELITE.
THAT WAS THE PRIZE... ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SURVIVE THE COUNTLESS DEATHTRAPS LINING THE ANTI-GRAV DOME...
...AND ALL THE FLASHING WEAPONS OF YOUR FELLOW OPPONENTS...
WHILE A ROARING CROWD CHEERED AND ADVISED THEIR FAVORITES,
SWIM FOR IT... UP THROUGH THE SAFETY RING!
GO FOR THE CIRCLE!
SWIM!
NO...! FIGHT! ELIMINATE THE OTHERS BEFORE YOU SWIM!
NO ONE MADE IT, COMMANDER... THE ARENA WAS JAMMED AND NO ONE MADE IT.
OF COURSE NOT, BALLARD. THEY'RE ALL AMATEURS FUN TO WATCH--
--BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THEY PUT HUNTSMEN IN THERE.
THE CITY'S GOLDEN CIRCLE CAN ONLY SUPPORT SO MANY--
--THEY'VE GOT TO MAKE IT HARD.

THAT'S WHY THEY KEEP US OUT, RIGHT, COMMANDER? THE CIRCLE WOULD BE ALL HUNTSMEN.
UNLESS THEY HAD TO FIGHT EACH OTHER. BUT WE DON'T NEED THE ARENA. WE CAN EARN OUR WAY. SOMEHOW--
WHETHER OR NOT CABLE TOOK IT FOR GRANTED, BALLARD DIDN'T...
--I LIKE THAT BETTER. NOT THAT ANY OF US SHOULD TAKE IT FOR GRANTED.
...HE THREW HIMSELF INTO HUNTSMAN TRAINING RESOLVED TO MAKE THE MOST OF HIS OPPORTUNITY...
...TO WIN THE RESPECT OF HIS INSTRUCTOR...
...AND TO NEVER EXPERIENCE THE DESPERATION AND INDIGNITY HE AND STRYDE BOTH SEEMED TO SENSE IN THE ARENA.
NO MATTER WHAT THE PRIZE... YOU'RE JUST A SHOW FOR THE CROWD AT LEAST OUT HERE... WE'RE DOING A JOB.
EVEN IN THE MIDST OF SLUMZONE IT MADE BALLARD FEEL GRATEFUL...

UNTIL SUDDENLY, VIOLENTLY, HE WAS MADE AWARE HOW FAR HIS THOUGHTS HAD TAKEN HIM FROM THE TASK AT HAND!
NO HUNTSMAN'S GETTIN' ME! ANYBODY DIES... GONNA BE YOU!
HE DIDN'T PANIC. BALLARD HAD TRAINED TOO LONG AND TOO HARD TO EVER DO THAT.
HE DID IT JUST LIKE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO; PERHAPS EVEN A BIT BETTER THAN MOST...
UNTIL HIS TARGET BROKE FOR COVER AND ESCAPE.
THAT'S NO ANDROID...! THIS TIME IT'S REAL!
AND ONCE AGAIN... HE HESITATED.
I...I'M SORRY COMMANDER.
SORRY WON'T SAVE YOUR HIDE MISTER...
--OR YOUR JOB IF A TARGET GETS AWAY! YOU'RE TOO GOOD TO HIT THE SLIDE TOWARD THE ORGAN BANKS, BALLARD... GET BETTER!
KA-POW
NOT QUITE LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE... BUT ALMOST.


FOLLOWING THAT DISAPPOINTMENT... YET ANOTHER.
I'M MOVING CABLE HERE TO FULL-TIME DUTY, STRYDE. HOW ABOUT BALLARD...? WE'RE GOING TO HAVE PLENTY OF OPENINGS.
MIGHT BE PREMATURE. WHY THE RUSH, DIGBY?
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE SCUTTLEBUTT? THE GOLDEN CIRCLE'S ABOUT TO WIDEN, YOU 'OL WARHORSE!
AND THE SENATE'S SENDING DOWN A NEW REGULATION THAT'LL GIVE HUNTSMEN AN INSIDE TRACK!
NOT BEING AN OVER-ACHIEVER LIKE YOU, STRYDE, WHO'D GUESS I'D EVER GET A SHOT AT RIPE OLD AGE?
SENILITY MUST'VE OVER-TAKEN THE SENATORS, DIG! JUST DON'T EXHAUST ALL THOSE CIRCLE BENE-FITS BEFORE I JOIN YOU.
CABLE LAUGHED ALONG WITH THE OLDER HUNTSMEN. HE WAS ENTITLED. HE WAS ONE OF THEM NOW. BALLARD TURNED, STILL A TRAINEE.
AND MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO END THAT STATUS.
REFLEX
DLOGRAM
TARGET
UNIT
PROGRAM PHASE
1
2
3
START
STOP/RESET
ATTENTION--YOU HAVE ACTIVATED THE MOST ADVANCED TARGETING PROGRAM--IT IS A REQUALIFICATION SYSTEM FOR A-CLASS VETERANS ONLY--LOWER LEVEL HUNTSMEN FACE A DANGER OF--
NO FEEDBACK-SHOCK, STATISTICS, COMPUTER. JUST START THE SHOW.
GOT A SLIGHT HESITATION PROBLEM TO WORK OUT.

THE IMAGES FORMED WITH UNBELIEVABLE SWIFTNESS.
BALLARD REACTED.
AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN TARGET SPEEDS INCREASED REALITY BLURRED.
TIME AND PLACE BEGAN TO DISAPPEAR FOR HIM.
THERE WAS ONLY THREAT...
REACTION.
THREAT REACTION.
AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN...
UNTIL...
START
STOP/RESET
--NO ONE'S EVER RUN UP A SCORE LIKE THAT ON THE A-CLASS SYSTEM...INCLUDING ME!
WITH THAT IN THE COMPUTER RECORDS--
--I COULDN'T KEEP YOU FROM FULL DUTY NOW EVEN IF I WANTED TO.
HANDLE YOURSELF AS WELL IN THE FIELD BALLARD... AND I WON'T BE ANYTHING BUT PROUD.
ENOUGH! NOW YOU'VE REALLY GONE AND DONE IT, MISTER!

BALLARD WAS STILL BASKING IN THE GLOW OF STRYDE'S WORDS WHEN HE JOINED THE COMMANDER AT [illegible]

I'VE NEVER *SEEN* FIGHTING LIKE THIS...!

SO MUCH *BETTER* THAN USUAL. AND THAT *ONE*--

WATCH HIM, BALLARD! HE'S LEADING HIS OPPONENTS INTO THE *TRAPS!*

THE FIGURE IN THE ARENA'S TRADITIONAL SYNTHI-ARMOR MOVED *SLOWER* THAN OTHERS IN THE ANTI-GRAVITY FIELD, BUT WITH *ASSURANCE* AND *EXPERIENCE*...

...AND ANY FOES WHO COULDN'T BE *TRICKED* FELL INTO A SHARPLY WIELDED *SHOCK-MACE*.

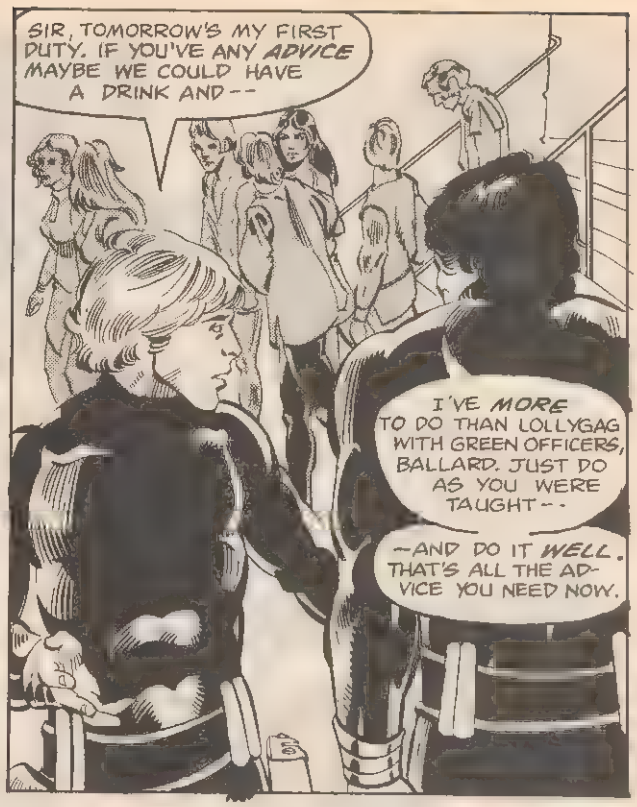
NOTHING STOPPED HIS UPWARD SWIM. EXCITEMENT RACED THROUGH THE CROWD. THE MACE WAS DROPPED.

HE WAS GOING FOR THE SAFETY RING, FOR THE GOLDEN CIRCLE. AND *NOTHING* COULD STOP HIM; ABSOLUTELY...

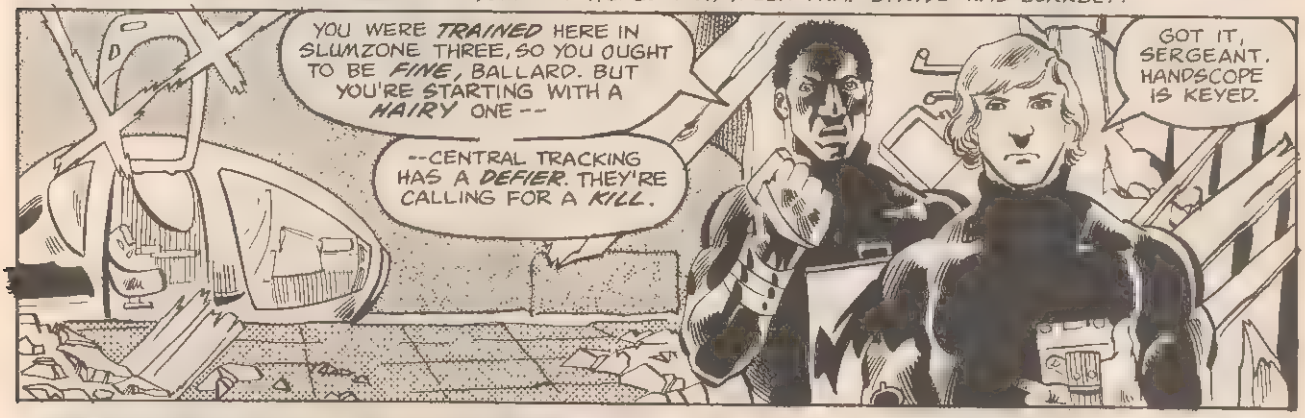
NO ONE SAW EXACTLY WHERE THE ENERGY BEAM SHOT FROM. IT HAD SEEMED ALL THE ARENA'S DEATHTRAPS WERE ALREADY TRIGGERED.

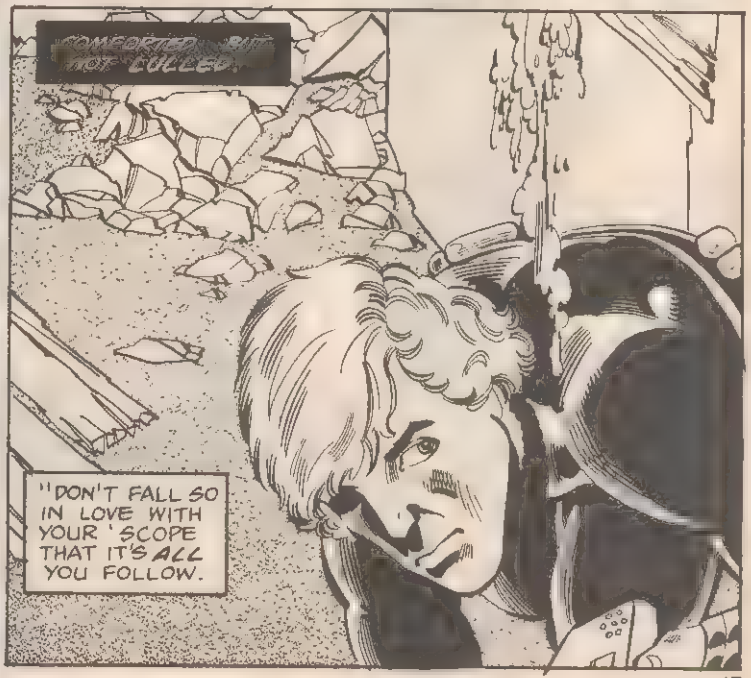
THE CROWD SWIFTLY FOUND NEW FAVORITES TO CHEER, THOUGH A FEW DISPLAYED ANGER OR DISAPPOINTMENT.

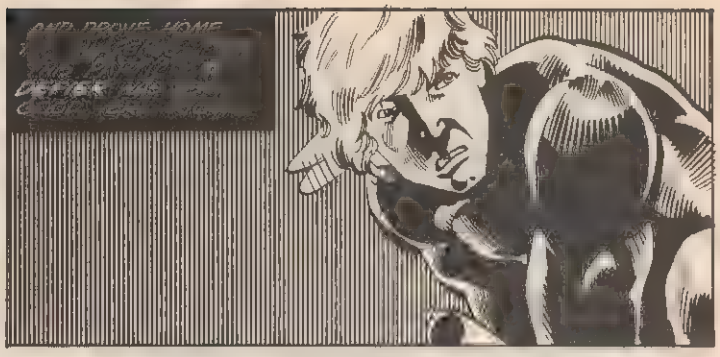
SOME FAR MORE THAN OTHERS

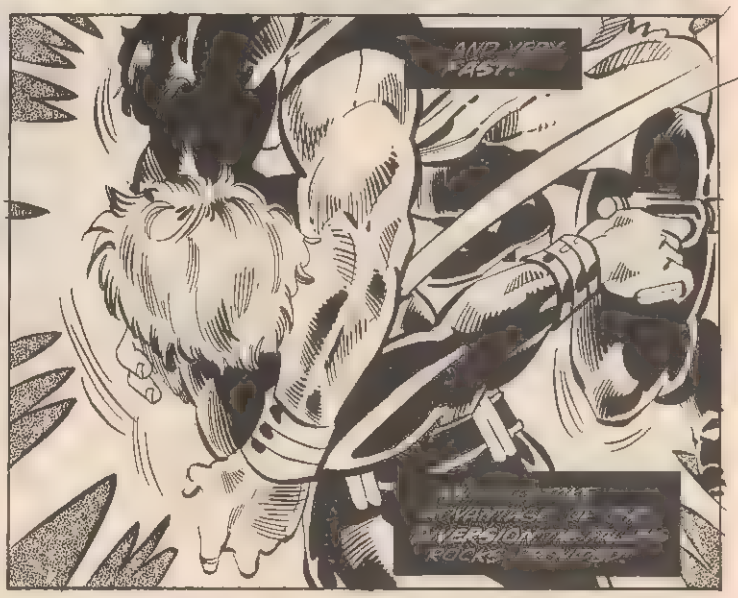


AND REPORTING TO DUTY IN THE MORNING, BALLARD HOPED VERY MUCH THAT STRYDE WAS CORRECT.

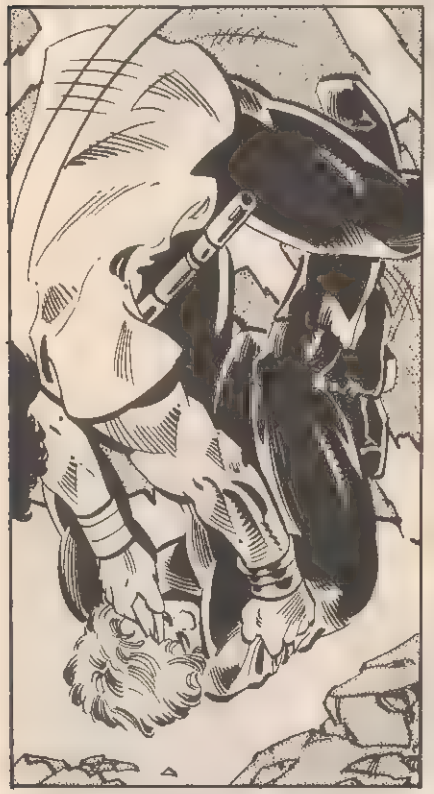








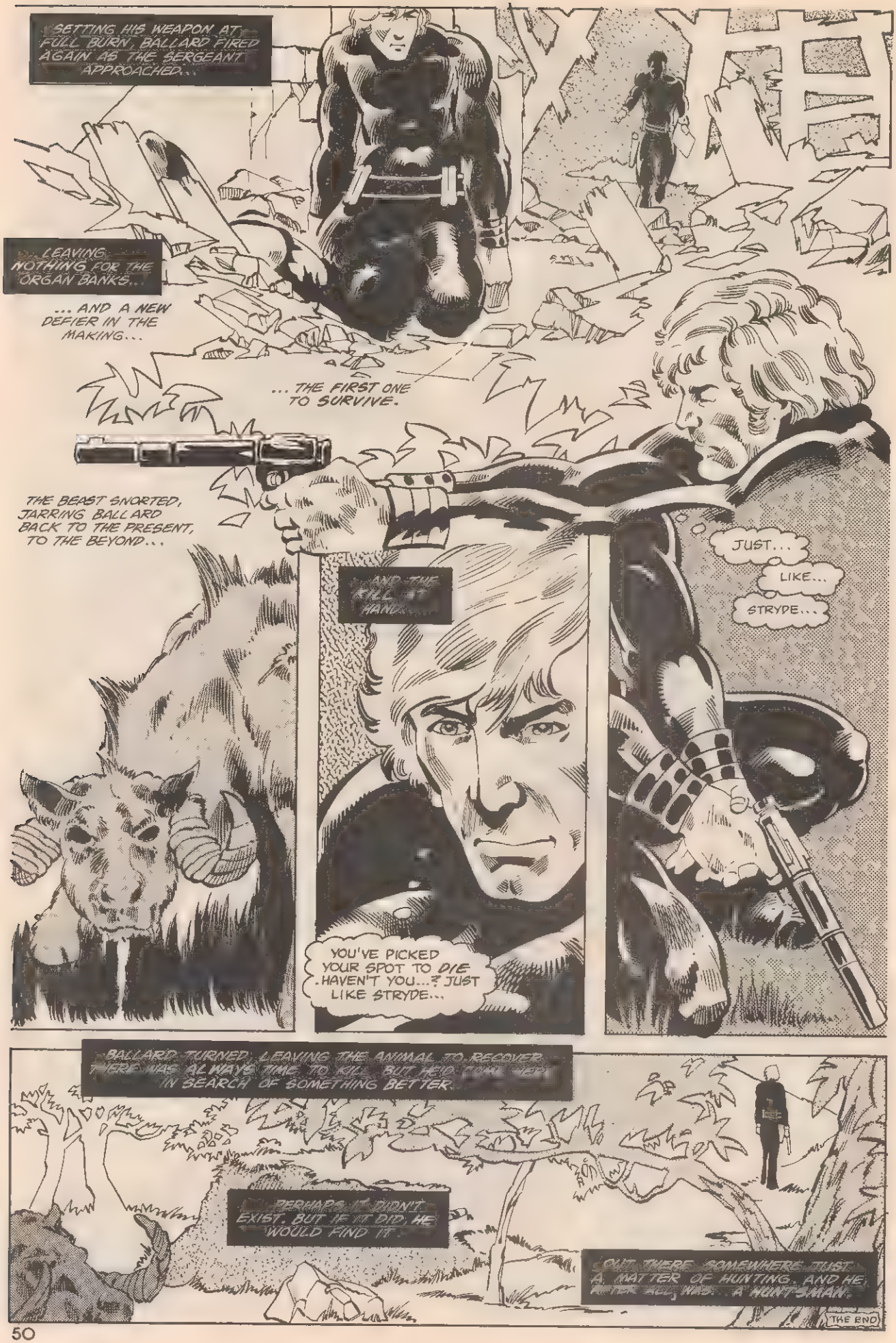
THE MAN'S **STRENGTH** WAS IMPRESSIVE. AND HE HAD PLENTY OF **SKILL** TO ACCOMPANY IT.



BUT IN THE END, IT WAS WHAT STRYDE HAD PUSHED HIM TO MASTER THAT TRULY MATTERED.

...WITHOUT HESITATION.

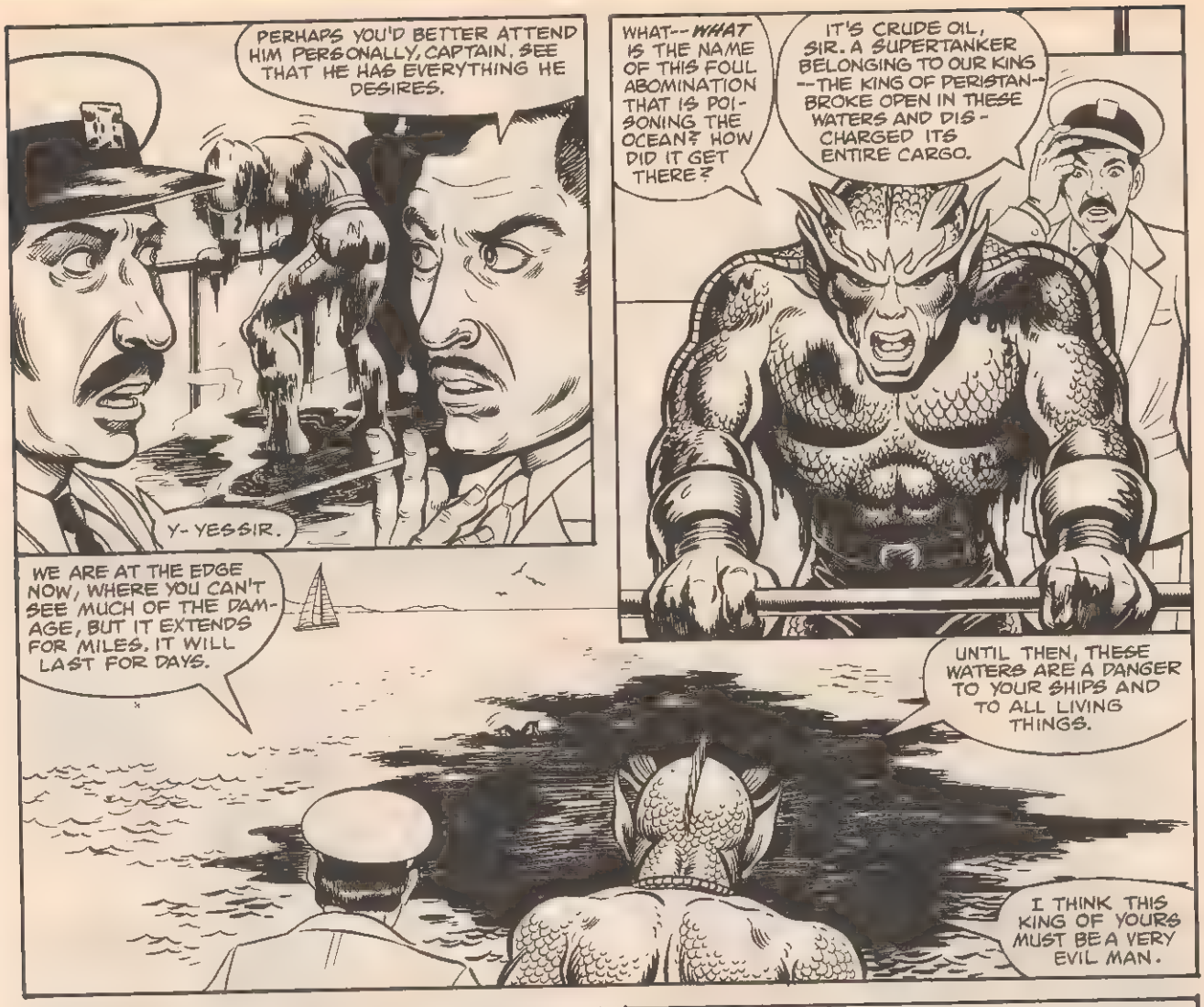
BALLARD APPROACHED WITH CAUTION... THE DEFIER WAS STILL BREATHING
N-NOT BAD, HUNTSMAN...! GLAD I CHOOSE YOUR ZONE!..! BODY SHOT ISN'T ALWAYS...INSTANTANEOUS... LIKE HEAD SHOT...
...BUT IT'S...A MUCH S-SURER HIT...UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES...
W-WHAT...?! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WHO--?
COMMANDER!
COMMANDER STRYDE!
HOW CAN YOU BE A... A DEFIER?!
PRETTY E-EASY...
...AFTER THAT NEW REGULATION ...ONE THAT MADE OL' DIGBY SO HAPPY...'CAUSE IT GAVE... HUNTSMEN INSIDE TRACK TO...GOLDEN CIRCLE...
ONLY... THAT 'INSIDE TRACK' WAS THE ARENA, BALLARD...! NO MORE EARNING OUR WAY ...NO MORE TEN YEARS GRACE...
B-BUT...HUNTSMEN CAN OUTFIT ANYONE ELSE, SO THE ARENA IS--
RIGGED, BALLARD...! NO ONE WINS...EXCEPT GOLDEN CIRCLE...!
G-GUESSED THAT WHEN... I SAW DIG' GET IT LAST NIGHT...! RECOGNIZED HIS FIGHTING STYLE... WITH THAT SHOCK-MACE...! INVESTIGATED...! GOLDEN CIRCLE NEVER CHANGES... USE ORGAN BANKS... TO LIVE FOREVER...
... AND REST OF US... EVEN HUNTSMEN... JUST EXIST...TO KEEP 'EM IN PARTS...! ARENA IS... MAIN SOURCE...! RATHER DEFY... THAN WIND UP... THERE...!
HAS TO BE... SOMETHING BETTER... SOMEWHERE...
F-FIND IT, BALLARD...! YOU'RE GOOD ENOUGH... TO BEAT THEM... TO ESCAPE...! MAYBE... IN... THE BEYOND...! GOT TO BE... BETTER... THAN T-THISS-S-S-!


SETTING HIS WEAPON AT FULL BURN, BALLARD FIRED AGAIN AS THE SERGEANT APPROACHED...
LEAVING NOTHING FOR THE ORGAN BANKS...
... AND A NEW DEFIER IN THE MAKING...
... THE FIRST ONE TO SURVIVE.
THE BEAST SNORTED, JARRING BALLARD BACK TO THE PRESENT, TO THE BEYOND...
AND THE KILL IT HAND
YOU'VE PICKED YOUR SPOT TO DIE, HAVEN'T YOU...? JUST LIKE STRYDE...
JUST...
LIKE...
STRYDE...
BALLARD TURNED, LEAVING THE ANIMAL TO RECOVER. THERE WAS ALWAYS TIME TO KILL, BUT HE'D COME HERE IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING BETTER.
PERHAPS IT DIDN'T EXIST. BUT IF IT DID, HE WOULD FIND IT.
OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, JUST A MATTER OF HUNTING. AND HE, AFTER ALL, WAS... A HUNTSMAN.
THE END

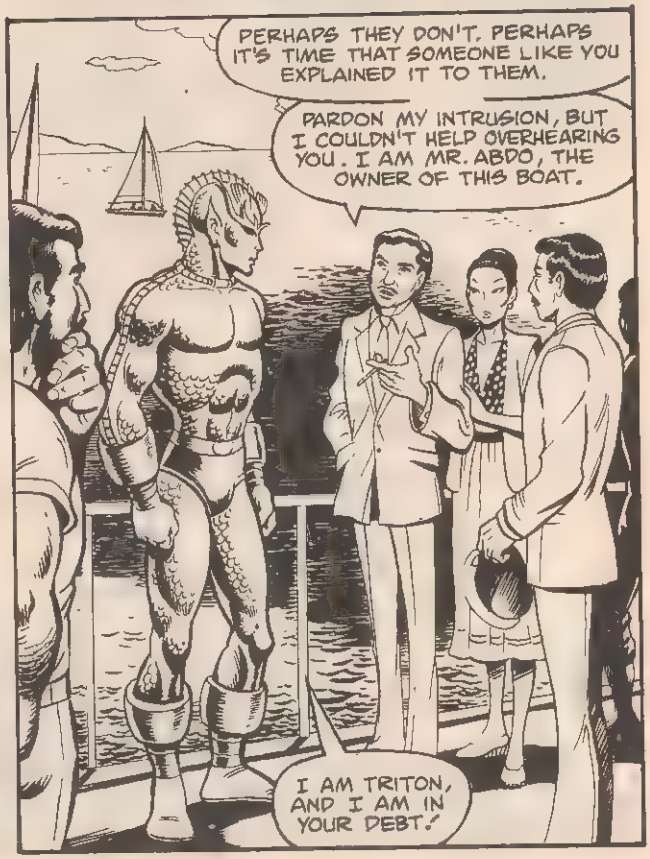
CONSCIENCE OF THE KING
AH! THERE CAN BE NO JOY--NO FREEDOM GREATER THAN THIS!
HE IS CALLED TRITON, OF THE LEGENDARY INHUMANS, A RACE OF GENETICALLY MUTATED BEINGS--EACH UNIQUE IN CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE--WHO LIVE IN A PLACE CALLED THE GREAT REFUGE HIDDEN IN THE HIMALAYAS.
YET, TRITON IS SELDOM FOUND IN HIS NATIVE LAND, FOR HE IS A WATER BREATHER AND A SEEKER BY NATURE, AND THE GREAT OCEANS THAT ENCIRCLE THE GLOBE ARE MORE TRULY HIS HOME THAN ANY SOIL CAN EVER BE.
HOW I PITY THE REST OF MY RACE, AND ALL THE OTHER SURFACE DWELLERS, WHEN I REFLECT THAT THE EXHILARATION I FEEL, AND THE GREAT BEAUTIES THAT LIE BEFORE ME, ARE FOREVER BEYOND THEIR GRASP.

IN HARMONY WITH NATURE--IN COMPLETE PEACE--
--SURELY THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE!
HE BREAKS THE SURFACE IN A DIVE THAT IS NEVER COMPLETED.
WHAT--?! SOME KIND OF SLIME ... THICK, HORRIBLE...
COVERING THE OCEAN... COVERING ME...!
IT'S CLOGGING MY GILLS ... FILLING THE SALINE TUBING THAT WOULD LET ME EXTRACT OXYGEN FROM THE AIR...
OO ...CHOKING...
IN SECONDS, HE IS BEYOND HOPE...
...BUT NOT BEYOND HELP!
SIR, OVER THERE, AHEAD OF US. I-I THINK IT'S A MAN.
HE... LOOKS LIKE HE'S STILL MOVING.
AHEAD THEN, CAUTIOUSLY. WE'LL SEE IF WE CAN EFFECT A RESCUE!

GENTLY NOW...
ALL RIGHT! I'VE GOT HIM!
TELL THE CAPTAIN HE CAN MOVE THE BOAT BACK TO SAFETY.
WHERE DID HE COME FROM?
PERHAPS A LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMER...?
MAYBE HE FELL FROM A BOAT LIKE OURS, OUT HERE TO INSPECT THE DISASTER.
HE'S STILL ALIVE, SIR, BUT HE SEEMS TO BE CHOKING!
WELL, HOSE HIM OFF, AND SEE IF THAT MAKES HIM ANY MORE COMFORTABLE.
VERY WELL, SIR.
DON'T WORRY. WE WILL SOON HAVE YOU CLEAN!
THE JET OF WATER SLUICES OVER TRITON, WASHING AWAY THE FILTH THAT COVERS HIM AND REVEALING...
EH?
JUST WHAT HAVE WE PICKED UP HERE, CAPTAIN?
I... DON'T KNOW, SIR!
IT'S A SEA MONSTER!
THE GOD OF THE DEEP.
POSEIDON HIMSELF.
WHATEVER--AND WHOEVER--OUR GUEST MAY BE, HE'S HAD A MOST HARROWING AND UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE.
I WANT YOU ALL TO TREAT HIM WITH THE UTMOST CAUTION AND COURTESY...


PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER ATTEND HIM PERSONALLY, CAPTAIN. SEE THAT HE HAS EVERYTHING HE DESIRES.
Y- YESSIR.
WHAT-- WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS FOUL ABOMINATION THAT IS POISONING THE OCEAN? HOW DID IT GET THERE?
IT'S CRUDE OIL, SIR. A SUPERTANKER BELONGING TO OUR KING --THE KING OF PERISTAN-- BROKE OPEN IN THESE WATERS AND DISCHARGED ITS ENTIRE CARGO.
WE ARE AT THE EDGE NOW, WHERE YOU CAN'T SEE MUCH OF THE DAMAGE, BUT IT EXTENDS FOR MILES. IT WILL LAST FOR DAYS.
UNTIL THEN, THESE WATERS ARE A DANGER TO YOUR SHIPS AND TO ALL LIVING THINGS.
I THINK THIS KING OF YOURS MUST BE A VERY EVIL MAN.

OH NO! IN FACT, HE'S... THAT IS... WHAT BEFELL THE TANKER WAS AN ACCIDENT. NO HARM WAS DONE DELIBERATELY. AND THE PEOPLE OF PERISTAN NEED OIL.
WITHOUT IT, WE WOULD BE A VERY POOR NATION.
DON'T THESE FOOLS -- THESE DESPOILERS--SEE? NO AMOUNT OF WEALTH WILL EVER ENABLE THEM TO BUY BACK WHAT THEY HAVE DESTROYED!


PERHAPS THEY DON'T. PERHAPS IT'S TIME THAT SOMEONE LIKE YOU EXPLAINED IT TO THEM.
PARDON MY INTRUSION, BUT I COULDN'T HELP OVERHEARING YOU. I AM MR. ABDO, THE OWNER OF THIS BOAT.
I AM TRITON, AND I AM IN YOUR DEBT.

I WISH YOU WOULD REMAIN, AND SPEAK MORE OF THIS!
SPEAK TO YOUR KING. TELL HIM IT IS FOLLY TO RAPE AND POISON THE WORLD THAT GAVE YOU LIFE.
AGAIN, MY THANKS.
FARE-WELL.
THE FOOLS! THEY HAVEN'T EVEN NOTICED US.
THEY THINK WE ARE SIMPLE FISHERMAN, COME LIKE THEM TO OBSERVE THE CATASTROPHE.
INSTEAD, WE ARE HERE TO CREATE ONE.
TZING
EH?
OOH!
GET BELOW, SIR!
IT IS OUR JOB TO PROTECT YOU FROM MURDEROUS RABBLE LIKE THIS!
AGHN
BLAM!
THE CREW RANGE THEMSELVES ALONG THE PORT SIDE OF THE BOAT INTENT ON ITS DEFENSE...
...AND IGNORANT OF POSSIBLE DANGER ON ITS STARBOARD SIDE!
AND, SOME DISTANCE AWAY...
THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE...COMING FROM THE BOAT THAT RESCUED ME!

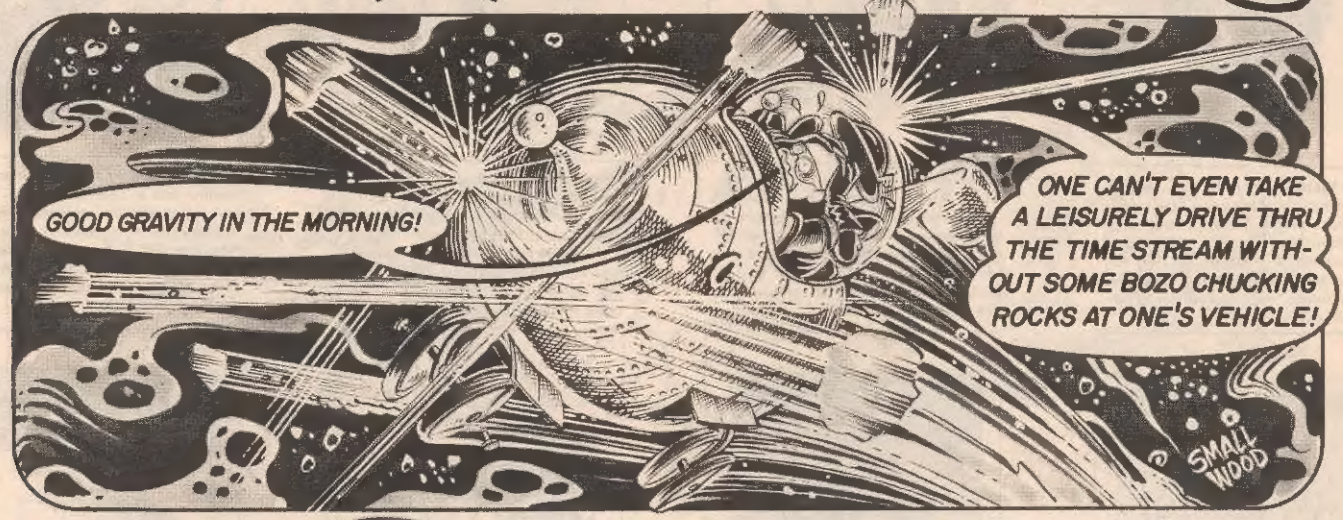
HAH! CREDULOUS IMBECILES, VALIANTLY DEFENDING AGAINST ONE BOAT, LETTING THEMSELVES BE DECOYED WHEN THEY WERE UNDER ATTACK BY TWO!
AND NOW, ABDO, YOU ARE OURS!
SO I AM.
AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN FROM ALL THIS CARNAGE?
A HOSTAGE? A RICH RANSOM?
PUBLICITY?
OF COURSE NOT. I'VE SEEN OTHERS WHO SOUGHT THOSE THINGS, WATCHED AS SITUATIONS THEY THOUGHT THEY CONTROLLED TURNED IN THEIR HANDS AND DESTROYED THEM.
BUT CHEER UP. AFTER TODAY, THOSE FAT AND LAZY DOGS YOU REPRESENT WILL REVERE YOU AS A MARTYR!
WHAT, NO LAST WORDS? NO FINE SPEECHES? NO PLEAS FOR MERCY?
I WILL NOT BEG.
WHOOP--!
TAKE HEART, MISTER ABDO, I'VE COME TO REPAY YOUR KINDNESS!
A SEA MONSTER! THE VERY OCEANS ARE PROTECTING THE PERISTANI DEVILS!

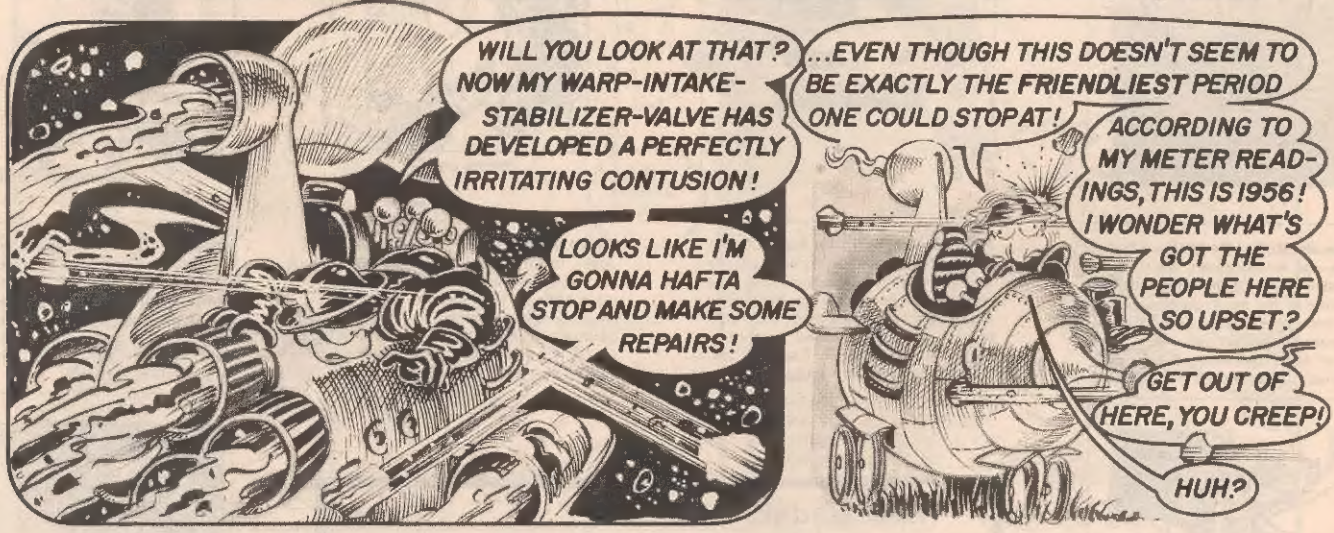
HA-HA! THEIR WEAPONS CANNOT HARM ME, NOT WHILE THE OCEAN DEFLECTS THE BULLETS THEY FIRE!
BUT THEY STILL PRESENT A SERIOUS DANGER TO ABDO AND HIS MEN.
I MUST ACT QUICKLY TO SAVE LIVES!
KRAK
OOMPH
AAIIEEE!
ACK
HE'S BACK! THE MERMAN HAS COME BACK AND SAVED US!
YES. A TREMENDOUS RETURN FOR OUR CHARITY, DON'T YOU THINK?
OH, NO! MY BOAT... WHAT IS THAT FREAK GOING TO...?
TRITON IS A CREATURE OF THE SEAS, BORN TO SWIM ITS DEPTHS AND WITHSTAND TREMENDOUS PRESSURES..
HIS MIGHT IS THE MIGHT OF ITS CREATURES, THE SHARK AND THE WHALE...

... AND HE USES IT WELL!
SLOSH
ABANDON SHIP!
BACK TO OUR BOAT!
WE MUST AWAY!
VROOM
INGENIOUS, THERE WAS A MOTOR CONCEALED BENEATH THE HULL OF THEIR SAILBOAT.
TRITON, HOW CAN WE EVER REPAY YOU? MY CREW AND I OWE YOU OUR LIVES!
AS I OWED YOU MINE. THERE ARE NO DEBTS BETWEEN US.
BUT I SHALL ALWAYS BE HAPPY TO CALL YOU...MY FRIEND.
MR. ABDO... YOUR HIGHNESS ...SHOULD WE NOT HAVE TOLD HIM?
NO. FOR TODAY, AT LEAST, IS BETTER NOT TO. I HAVE BEEN A KING FOR MANY YEARS AND IT HAS BROUGHT ME WEALTH AND SATISFACTION..
BUT TODAY, MY FRIEND HAS SHOWN THAT IT MAY ALSO BRING ME SHAME.

AND NOW-- THE ADVENTURES OF THAT TIME-TRAVELIN'

BUCKY BIZARRE!





EXCUSE ME, MONSTER...
...BUT, WHILE I STAND CONVENIENTLY BEHIND YOU SO I DON'T GET HIT BY ANY OF THOSE ROCKS, WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
SURE THING, STRANGER...
WHEN A HALF-MAD SCIENTIST ADROITLY DUMPED SOME RADIO-ACTIVE CHEMICALS INTO A NEAR-BY BOG ALREADY FILLED TO OVER-FLOWING WITH GARBAGE AND DON-KEY DROPPINGS, I SOMEHOW GREW OUT OF ALL THAT GLOP! AND NOW...
NO NEED TO GO ANY FURTHER! I GET THE PICTURE!
THESE ARE THE DAYS BEFORE MOVIES LIKE "CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND," BEFORE COMIC BOOKS LIKE "MAN-THING!"
PEOPLE BACK HERE BELIEVE THAT ANYONE WHO'S ALIEN IS AUTOMATICALLY EVIL! AND WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS PROVE THEM WRONG! RIGHT?
JUST THEN...
HEY! LOOK AT THAT!
GOOD GRIEF! WHILE WE'VE BEEN BUSY STONING THE MONSTER, THE VILLAGE IDIOT FROM SOME NEAR-BY VILLAGE WHERE THEY ALLOW IDIOTS TO RESIDE IS EVEN NOW ABDUC-TING THE DAUGHTER OF THE PRESIDENT OF OUR PTA!
AND HE'S GOT A GUN!
STAY BACK OR I'LL SHOOT!
THIS IS YOUR BIG CHANCE, MY FRIEND! I MEAN, YOU ARE BULLET-PROOF, AREN'T YOU? MOST RADIOACTIVE MONSTERS FROM THE FIFTIES ARE! SO--GO GET HIM! SAVE THE GIRL!
I SAID STAY AWAY!
PTING
CRAK CRAK
PTING
PTING
URK!
NOW YOU'RE GONNA GET IT!
KICK ME!

WOW! DID YOU SEE THAT? THE MONSTER JUST PULLED THAT GUY'S ARMS AND LEGS OFF, THEN KICKED HIM ACROSS THE STREET!
WHAT A HERO!
I WANT TO GIVE YOU OUR HEART-FELT THANKS, MONSTER, FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR OUR SUBURBAN COMMUNITY!
AND MAINLY FOR WHAT YOU DID FOR MY DAUGHTER SAVING HER FROM A FATE WORSE THAN DEBT!
AWW, SHUCKS!
AND BEYOND THAT, WE'VE GOT ONE OTHER THING WE'D LIKE TO SAY...
AND THAT ONE OTHER THING IS--GET OUT OF HERE, YOU SLOB! YOU MAY BE A HERO BUT YOU STILL SMELL!
YEH, AND HURRY UP! BEFORE YOU LOWER EVERYONE'S PROPERTY VALUE!
HEY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MONSTER? DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE GIVING UP? C'MON! DON'T LET THE OPINIONS OF THESE STUPID PEOPLE GET YOU DOWN!
THEY'RE--
GRASS SEED
SAY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HOWCUM YOU'RE POURING GRASS SEED ON YOUR HEAD?
...BECAUSE I'VE DECIDED THOSE PEOPLE ARE RIGHT! I AM DISGUSTING!
AND I'M SICK OF BEING A STINKING CHUNK OF BOG SLOP! I WANT TO CHANGE! I WANT TO BE SOMETHING SUBURBANITES RESPECT--REALLY RESPECT AND REALLY CARE ABOUT!
GRASS SEED
YOU MEAN...?
GRASS SEED
YES! AS GRETA GARBO ONCE SAID...
I VANT TO BE A LAWN!

Next Issue:

Stephen King's

the Lawnmower Man

A brilliant fable by the world's most popular teller of terrifying tales, *STEPHEN KING*, and a modern master of graphics, *WALTER SIMONSON*. Not a story. An event. Marvel Preview #29. On sale October 27th.